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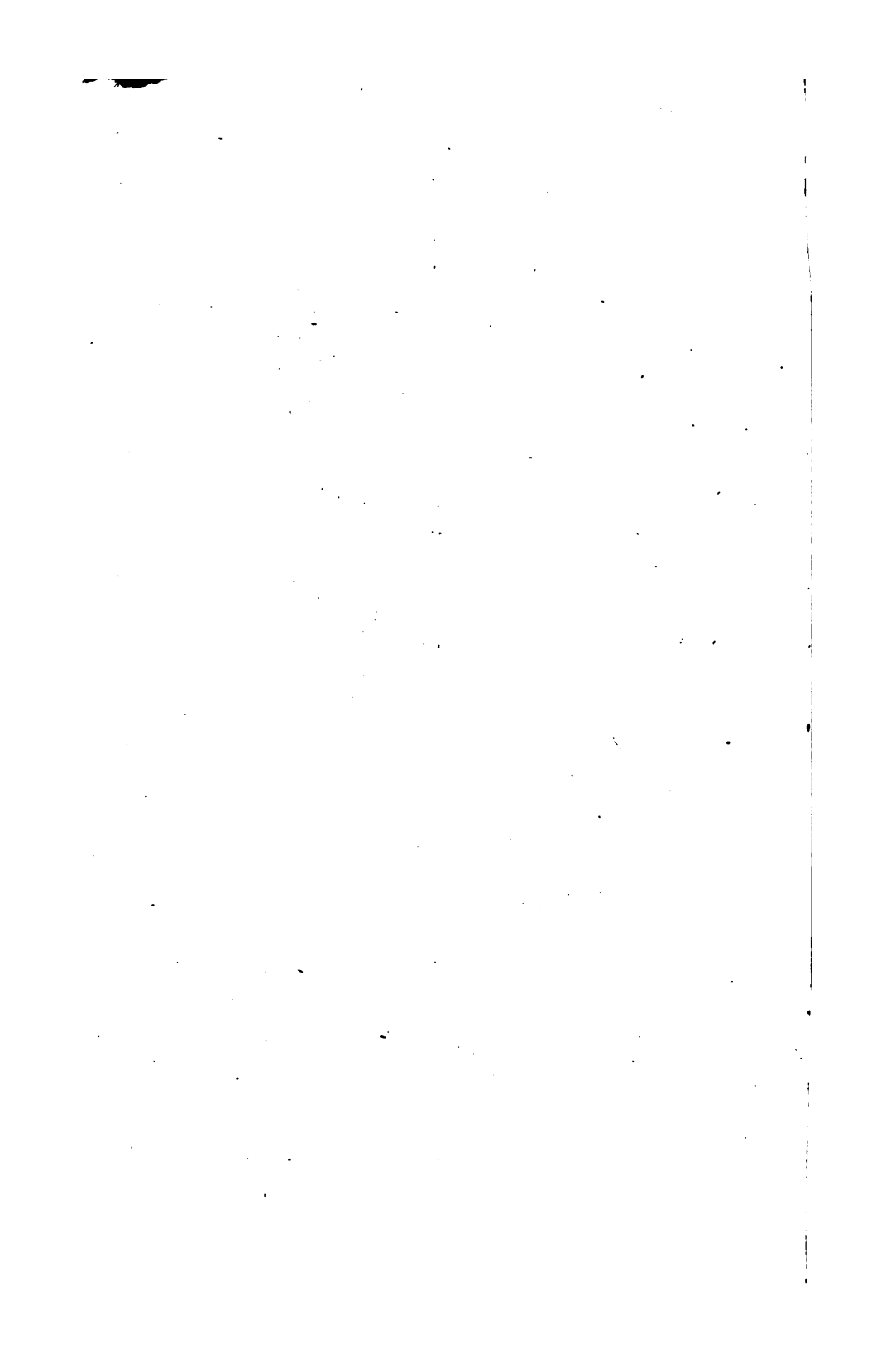
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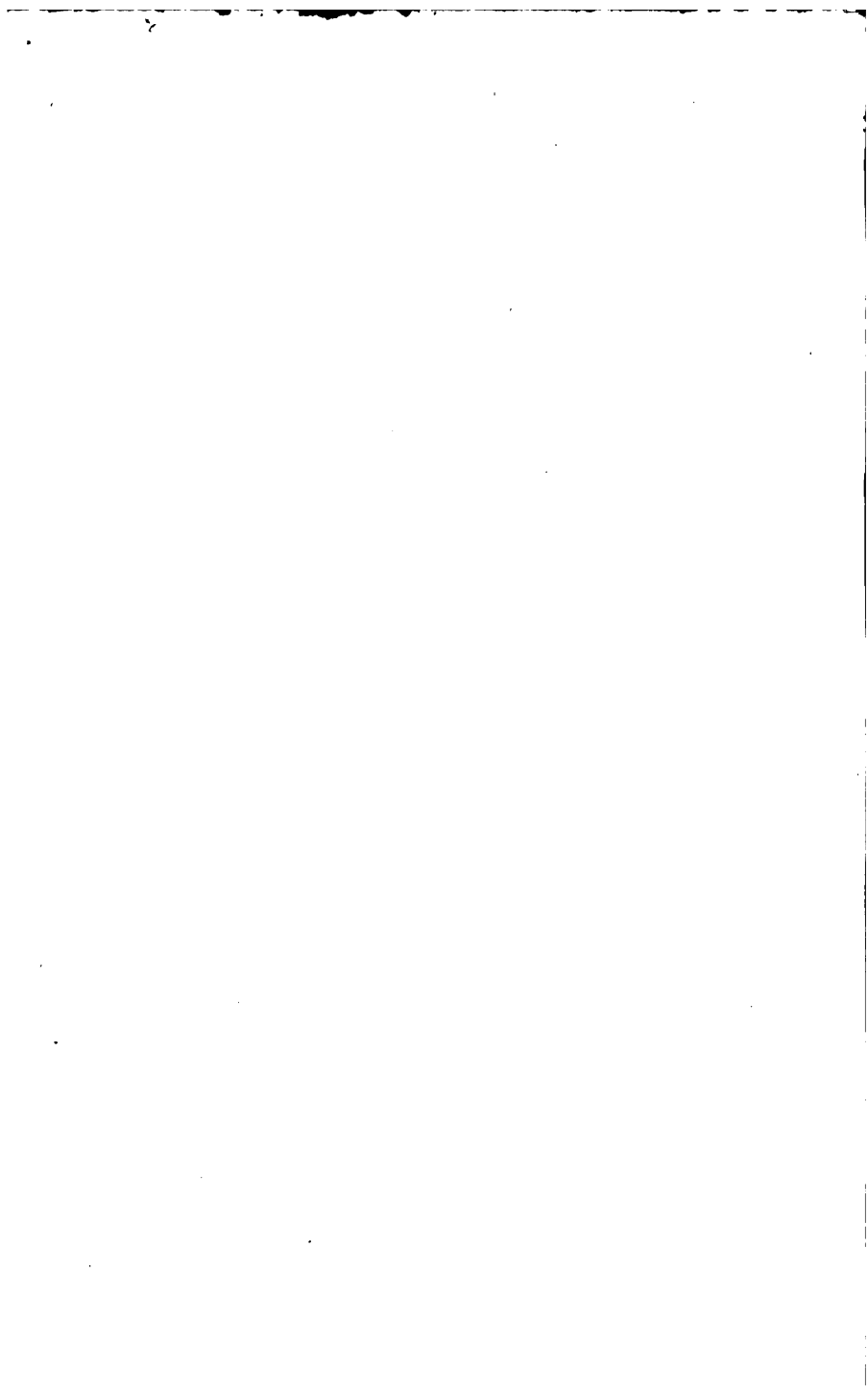


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I E R N E.

VOL. II.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

M^{rs} Glover. With kind regards
from The Author.

Nov 4. 1871

I E R N E.

A TALE.

BY

W. STEUART TRENCH,

AUTHOR OF

'REALITIES OF IRISH LIFE.'

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1871.

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1981. 12. 20. 12. 20. 12. 20.

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THE SECOND VOLUME.



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I E R N E.

N

CHAPTER I.

THE DISCOVERY.

KATHLEEN and her sister awaited anxiously the arrival of their brother at Derreen. They had heard that Teague's trial had gone against him, and had also heard vague rumours that he had effected his escape from the dock ; but the story was too startling to believe, and they were most anxious to hear the facts from Donald.

At length he arrived. He had come from Kenmare by boat, accompanied by the youthful stranger. The surprise of the sisters on seeing the Saxon once more was unbounded, and their gratification was equal to their surprise.

'Teague has escaped !' exclaimed Donald, the moment he came within earshot of his sisters. 'He leaped out of the dock just as the judge

was going to pronounce sentence, knocked over the policeman on whose head and shoulders he alighted, dashed out of the court-house in the confusion, and ran for it down to the coast; he then got on board a hooker, which it appears was in waiting for him, and escaped out to sea, and has not since been heard of.'

IERNE could not help clapping her hands in an ecstasy of joy; but Kathleen looked more grave.

'Poor Teague!' she said. 'And what will become of him now?'

'Aye, that is indeed the difficulty,' replied Donald. 'We must only hope the best. He must keep out of the way until this matter blows over. *We* all know he is innocent, though certainly matters did go strangely against him on the trial. We must endeavour to let the truth be made known to the authorities, and then perhaps some high interest could be brought to bear in his favour, and his pardon might be obtained.'

'I fear I can do but little in a case like this,' observed the young man whom the sisters had hitherto known under the title of the Saxon stranger; 'but if you think I could have any influence with the Government, you may depend

on its being exerted to the utmost in his favour, both to let the true state of the case be understood, and also to obtain his pardon.'

'I had forgotten to introduce to you—The Earl of Killarney!' said Donald, addressing his sisters. 'Our guest has thrown off his incognito; indeed he was compelled to do so at the trial, and I must now present him to you in his true name and rank.'

'And a very sorry figure I made of it at the trial,' replied the Earl, laughing; 'there was scarcely a folly or misdeed I have committed since I came to Ireland that was not dragged from me by that troublesome lawyer Mr. B——, and amongst my other confessions he made me announce my name. I would willingly have concealed it a little longer, as I am certain I shall never again have so good an opportunity of seeing Ireland in her true colours, and hearing the true sentiments of her sons and daughters, as I have had whilst enjoying the charming hospitality of your roof. And now,' he continued, turning to Ierne and her sister, 'I have to express my most profound apologies for having so long sailed—I will not say under false colours—but *without* colours, in your company. My only excuse must be that the moment

I first saw your brother I told him all, so that he at least was not ignorant of the real name of his guest.'

Ierne stood like a statue whilst the stranger made this confession. She neither moved nor spoke. Her face became deadly pale, and she seemed quite incapable of controlling the fixed and penetrating look with which she regarded the young man before her. At length she drew a long breath, and holding out her hand she said, 'We must salute you under a new title, my lord, and we welcome you to Derreen most sincerely, but—' and here she stopped and hesitated for a moment, during which the blood rushed back to her cheeks.

'But exactly on the same terms as before,' interrupted the Earl hastily. 'I trust, whilst I remain, I may be allowed to stand on exactly the same footing as heretofore. I always dreaded this,' he said, turning to Donald, distressed and almost annoyed as he observed Ierne's hesitation. 'May I earnestly beg you will persuade your sisters that an English gentleman is no more than an English gentleman, whether he have a title to his name or not, and as an English gentleman I have been already known to them. I trust I am safe in saying this.'

‘Most certainly,’ replied Donald. ‘As an English gentleman you came amongst us, and as such you have borne yourself throughout. There can be no question about that. But you must excuse my sisters if they are a little startled at the announcement which has been so suddenly made. We are not accustomed here to rank and titles ; our own have been long since wrested from us ; and it is hard for young girls to speak with the same freedom to the wealthy young Earl of Killarney as they have hitherto done to a plain English gentleman, even though his name was unknown.’

‘Just what I dreaded,’ replied the Earl, much disconcerted and annoyed ; and addressing Kathleen, who had hitherto stood silent and unmoved at this new and unexpected revelation, he said—

‘May I hope we shall be as good friends as before this unfortunate announcement ? You know not, you cannot know, the pleasure and advantage I have derived from my visit here. Surely all this need not be interrupted now.’

‘Lord Killarney,’ replied Kathleen, with a smile in which native dignity was mingled with sweetness and composure, ‘you need not fear the slightest alteration in me. Why should there

be? It is true you bear a lofty title, and that you are sprung from noble ancestors. But we cannot yield to you in these. Let us be friends then. Your title is Irish, my lord,' she added, 'it is yours by conquest as a companion of the old invader Strongbow. Who can tell but it may yet be ours again?'

'I would with all my heart,' he said, 'that I could confer it on one of your race, and amend in some slight degree the injury which my ancestors have so long inflicted upon yours. Perhaps even this might yet come to pass.'

'I cannot see it,' replied Kathleen. 'The haughty followers of Strongbow have never been too willing to disgorge either their estates or their titles, which they have wrung from us Irish by conquest.'

The young man turned to Ierne. 'Can *you* conceive it possible,' he said in a softened tone, 'that a channel could be formed in which the blue blood of the Irish race could mingle with that of the haughty Norman invader?'

'I can!' replied Ierne. 'And I have often dreamed of such; but it must be a channel cut out by the sword, in which the blood of the Saxon and the Celt shall mingle together when they meet in combat to fight for the ancient

land. I can conceive no other channel in which their blood could mingle than that.'

The Earl turned gently to Donald.

'My friend,' he said, 'for I know you will allow me to call you so notwithstanding the warlike speech of your sister, I have come to bid you farewell, and to thank you and your sisters for the great kindness and hospitality I have received at your hands. I should like also to know something about Teague before I leave. And if you think I can be of any use to him in his trouble, you may command my services to the utmost in any way you think desirable.'

'We are all grateful for the offer,' replied Donald, 'and perhaps we may yet draw upon your kindness. May I ask if your lordship intends soon to quit Ireland?'

'No,' replied the Earl. 'Now that my name is known I may as well remain and visit my estates at once. To-morrow I propose to go to Tipperary, in which county lies a considerable property which has been in my family for generations. There is no mansion house or landlord's residence upon it, but I have no doubt I can find accommodation somewhere in the locality.'

O'Sulevan said no more. He did not press him to remain. He felt that the announcement

of Lord Killarney's name and rank had created a distance between them which he was unwilling to acknowledge, but which he saw was experienced by every member of his family. It was impossible they could all be on exactly the same terms as before, and he did not object to the arrangement now proposed.

The little party walked up silently from the shore. A restraint which they could not avoid feeling had crept over all; and it was a relief when they reached the house.

Ierne, on retiring to her room, flung herself passionately on her bed. Now, for the first time, she knew that she loved the Saxon stranger. So long as he had maintained his disguise she had neglected—almost refused—to search into the secrets of her heart. She had yielded to the fascination of his company, had admired his courage, his gentleness, and his noble bearing, and by degrees had allowed herself to be entangled in an attachment which it was impossible she could longer indulge. What right had she, the daughter of a ruined house, to think of Lord Killarney as a lover? On the first announcement of his rank she could scarce restrain her tears. She experienced the terrible sensation that her heart had been taken away from her,

by one who could never give her his in return. Her pride rose high to her assistance, and prompted the wild words she used. But she little knew that he whom she deemed to be her greatest enemy, whom she almost longed in her anger to see confronted with the friends of Ireland in deadly strife, had equally lost his heart to her; and in truth was only prevented from telling her so plainly by the angry speech she had made in reply to his scarcely doubtful question.

Her sister Kathleen knocked gently at her door, and with difficulty obtained admittance. She found her still sobbing and giving way to the most passionate grief. She did not reproach her. She could guess the cause of her anguish, and only kissed her tenderly.

‘Get up, dearest, and dry your tears; you must soon come down; you must not let tears be noticed.’

‘I would die sooner than let him know I shed a tear,’ exclaimed Ierne; and springing from her bed she at once commenced her toilet, and soon obliterated all marks of her mental conflict.

The dinner was somewhat constrained, but the gentle and conciliatory manner of the Earl

gradually induced them to adopt some of their former freedom, and by the time the gentlemen had joined the ladies in the drawing-room all recent stiffness had nearly passed away.

‘I trust you will still permit me to call you by your own sweet name,’ said the Earl, approaching Ierne, and addressing her in a low voice; ‘and that you will allow me again, before I leave, to hear one of your beautiful songs?’

‘Willingly. Are you resolved to go early to-morrow?’

‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘I think it is better I should go; and,’ he added in a lower tone, ‘your warlike speech, embracing all my race, without exception, gives me little encouragement either to remain or return.’

Ierne was silent for a few minutes, her eyes cast down, whilst a deep blush suffused her cheeks. At length she looked up and said—

‘Have you ever, when angry, said what you did not quite think or wish?’

‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘Was that your case then?’

‘I am not sure,’ she answered. ‘Yes, partly so, but it is hard to analyse all our feelings.’

‘May I return?’ he said in a low voice.

‘Yes,’ she replied, in a voice equally low. ‘I shall be glad to see you.’

Both were silent for a few minutes. He then said,

‘You promised me a song. Will you sing it now?’

‘What would you like?’ asked Ierne.

‘Whatever you please,’ he replied; ‘only let it be national.’

He placed the guitar in her hands, and she sang the following lines:—

‘Oh blame me not, if I love to dwell
On Erin’s early glory:
Oh blame me not, if too oft I tell
The same inspiring story;
For sure ’tis much to know and feel
That the race now rated lowly
Once ruled as lords with sceptre of steel,
Whilst our Island was called the “Holy.”

‘’Tis much to know that our lov’d saints then
To their cloisters the stranger drew,
And taught the Goth and Saxon men
All of heaven the old earth knew;
When Alfred and Dagobert students were
In the sacred “Angel’s Vale,”
And harp heard harp in the midnight air
Pealing forth the hymns of the Gael.

‘’Tis much to know that in the west
The sun of our wisdom rose,
And the barbarous clouds that scarred its breast
Were scatter’d like baffled foes:

To know that in our heart there dwell
Some seeds of the men of story ;
*Oh blame me not, if I love to tell
Of Erin's ancient glory !*¹

‘You need not fear that I shall ever blame you for telling of Erin’s ancient glory,’ said the Earl gently, as he took her hand in his. ‘My sojourn here has at least taught me to honour and respect the feelings of her ancient people.’

Tears stood in Ierne’s eyes. ‘Good night,’ she said. ‘I am tired. We have had a long day of watching and anxiety. You leave early in the morning?’

‘Yes,’ he replied ; ‘but—*au revoir*?’

‘*Au revoir*,’ she said. ‘Good night.’

No sooner had the ladies retired than O’Sulevan addressed the Earl.

‘Your lordship said you were going to visit your estate in Tipperary. Have you any idea of what condition it is in, or how it is circumstanced?’

‘Very little,’ replied the Earl. ‘I know that it lies a few miles from what are called the “Devil’s Bit” Mountains, and is, on the whole, good land ; but I know little of its people or neighbourhood. I am resolved, however, to

¹ See Preface.

make myself acquainted with both, though I hear they are not the best disposed peasantry in the world.'

'Judge for yourself, my lord,' replied O'Sullivan, 'and let no man mislead you on that point. You must be fatigued after your long journey, and you say you must leave early to-morrow. Good night. I hope to see you off in the morning.' And he conducted the Earl to his room.

A somewhat different scene was being enacted in Teague's homely cottage across the little arm of the sea.

When Peggy and old Aileen had finished their supper, which had been so kindly prepared for them by the neighbours, and which Stephens and Teague had already taken advantage of, they carefully barred and locked the door, leaving a small window unfastened at the back of the house, to enable Teague to escape should an alarm be given; and the four who were now inside—Stephens, old Aileen, Peggy, and Teague, drew their chairs close to the fire to consult what should next be done.

'What will I do at all?' said Teague. 'The bloodhounds will surely be down upon me now, and what chance have I of escape? It would be a'most as good for me to be in prison as running for my life as I am.'

‘Don’t talk that way, Teague,’ said old Aileen, ‘and Mr. Stephens here that saved ye. Hould up a good heart, man, and all will go well yet. Where ought he to make for, Mr. Stephens, for surely this is no place for him?’

‘You’re right there, Mrs. O’Hanlon,’ replied Stephens. ‘He should be off at once to Tipperary. They are bold fellows there, and I know of no place where a man “on his keeping” is so safe as amongst the gallant boys of Tipperary.’

‘There is a first cousin of mine lives nigh the Devil’s Bit,’ said Teague. ‘I think he’d help a body in trouble well; what do you say if I’d be off to him in the morning early?’

‘You couldn’t do better,’ replied Stephens. ‘If there is a place in Ireland you’d be safe in, it’s there.’

‘Troth, and you’re right in that same,’ observed Aileen, ‘and so let it be. They are good friends down there, though I hear tell they do wild work sometimes.’

‘Never you mind that,’ replied Stephens. ‘Teague will have enough to do to mind himself—especially when he won’t have me with him.’

‘Well now, Mr. Stephens, but you managed

that well,' said Teague. 'And my ould mother's fainting in the beginning was just the making of it all. As sure as I live I thought she did it on purpose.'

'In troth, then, you are out there,' said Peggy. 'Sure wasn't I beside her all the time, and down she dropped in as raal a faint as ever a poor woman had. Why wouldn't she, poor soul, when her only son was dependin' on her, to be hanged or not?'

'Bedad,' said Teague, 'whether she was shammin' or not—and I still have my own opinion on that—sure it was the savin' of me anyway. May I never, but I could hardly run for laughin' when I leapt on the top of the policeman's head, and bowld him over like a nine-pin. That same chap would have took me after, only for the shot in the leg ye gave him, Mr. Stephens.'

'Well, well, sure ye are safe for a time anyway,' said Stephens, 'and troth it wasn't much good the young English lord did ye either, much as ye thought of him in the beginning.'

'Well, now, that's true,' replied Teague, 'and yet he done his best; but who could stand against those vagabon' lawyers? If that B—— didn't turn over the poor young lord,

it's no matter. Ye'd think he was all out a foot-ball for the kickin' and smashin' they gave him. But in troth he done his best, and I'd depend my life on him still, so I would, especially in a fair or pattern when fightin' is going on.'

'Well, Teague, it's time you were thinkin' of bein' off. It's little good the young lord could do ye, if once the police catch a hold of ye. So now to bed. And be up by daylight and away off to Thurles. Your friends live near that, and they'll take care ye don't starve any way.'

The party now separated for the night. Aileen retired to the room which she and Peggy occupied together. A separate apartment was prepared for Stephens, and Teague agreed to sleep on a settle bed in the kitchen.

As Peggy retired, she whispered to Teague that she would be out soon again. Teague nodded intelligence, and sat down by the fire 'to think,' as he expressed it.

When all was quiet and silent, and old Aileen fast asleep, Peggy cautiously opened the door, and stole gently into the kitchen, and without saying a word sat down before the fire beside Teague. She took his hand in hers, and sat for

some minutes, neither of them speaking a word. At last she said—

‘Teague, you and I were to have been married next Shrovetide—how will it be with us now?’

‘I can’t say, Peggy,’ replied Teague. ‘You know as much as I do. I am on my keepin’ now, and what’s the use of talkin’ of marryin’?’

‘No use at all,’ said Peggy. ‘I know that; I only wanted to show you I didn’t forget it. Nor I’d never forget it, if you were hung, drawn, and quartered, as they say they do to rebels. Teague, I’ll never forget you, come what will, and I hope you will never forget me.’

‘Never, my darlin’,’ cried Teague. ‘Never while there’s the breath of life in my body.’

‘I’m not so sure of that, Teague,’ said Peggy. ‘I know you think so now. But you are going to a country where there is wild work on foot, and pretty girls besides, and how will it be with you then?’

‘The same as it is now, Peggy,’ said Teague. ‘The same as it is now, darlin’; I wouldn’t care for all the purty girls in Ireland, and that’s a big word, for there’s plenty of them, compared with my own acushla machree—Peggy.’

‘I hope so, dear Teague, I hope so; but I

have a word to say besides that. Tipperary is a wild place, as I was saying, and the Devil's Bit Mountains, they say, is about the wildest in it. There are people there who would be only too glad to get you in with themselves, and may be it's joinin' them you'd be when I'm not with you to watch you. You know, Teague, you were always too fond of fightin'.'

'Well now, Peggy, I don't deny that; but sure it's hidin' I'll be from the Peelers all day instead of fightin'. Sorra stroke I'll hit mortal man till I see your own sweet face again, Peggy; and sure you'll let me out for a bit then, if it was nothin' but for the joy of seein' you.'

'None of your humbug, Teague,' said Peggy, who could not help smiling at the mode in which Teague proposed to testify his joy on his return. 'None of your humbug, Teague. Will you promise me now not to be joinin' with any of them wild chaps down about Borris-o-leigh or the Devil's Bit, where, if report be true, they would as soon shoot a landlord as look at him?'

'Ah, whisht, Peggy!' said Teague indignantly. 'Why would I be joining with the likes of them? What do you take me for at all?'

'I take ye for havin' an honest warm heart in your body, Teague, as ever beat inside that of a man yet, or I never would have promised

to take ye for my husband. But I take ye also for being light and flighty when ye get a drop in ye, and fond of fightin', so ye are ; and I'm in dhread lest any of those wild chaps down there should entice ye to mischief when they know you are on your keepin'. "It's as good to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb," says they, when they hear all about it. "In for a penny, in for a pound ;" and that's the way they'll be talkin', and what I'm afeared of is that maybe they'll get ye to do something bad when ye haven't me to watch over ye, Teague, dear.' And Teague felt the tears of the gentle affectionate girl drop fast upon his hand as she held it.

'Well now, listen to me, Peggy, darlin',' said Teague, in an earnest and solemn voice, 'I never deceived ye yet, and that ye know well, whatever white lies I might tell the family of an odd time up at the big house beyond, just to keep their minds 'asy, you know. But I never deceived *ye*, Peggy ; and now I'm as good as on my knees before ye, when I promise by the Blessed Virgin that I never will join with the likes of the chaps you talk of. They may do what they like themselves, but they'll never get me to join them, or do a bad act for them—

that is,' said Teague, correcting himself, 'barrin' the knockin' down of a policeman or two if they wanted to make bold to take me. Ye wouldn't object to that, Peggy, darlin', would ye? Sure I'd do that same if ye were lookin' at me with your own two purty eyes.'

Peggy neither granted nor refused her consent to the exception, but merely said—

'Well now, Teague, mind you have promised me, and whenever any of those wild chaps wants to tempt ye to do a bad act, just think for a moment of her you left behind in Glenmore, and say to yourself, "I wonder what would Peggy say to this?" and then you'll know well what Peggy would say; and little Peggy will be a guardian angel over you, Teague, and will pray for you while you are away, and maybe the Blessed Virgin will keep ye from all harm, and send ye back to your own Peggy again without a stain of crime upon you. So good-night, dear Teague, and remember all I said to ye.' And the sweet gentle girl threw her arms about his neck and kissed him, and cried like a little child. Then, disentangling herself from his embrace, she stole on tip-toe back to her little bed in old Aileen's room, where fatigue soon closed her eyelids in deep and innocent sleep.

CHAPTER II.

TIPPERARY.

THE traveller by the Great Southern and Western Railway in Ireland can scarcely fail to observe that remarkable gap in the top of the ridge of mountains which lies west of the line between the stations of Templemore and Thurles. The gap is called the 'Devil's Bit,' being exactly the shape of an enormous bite—if we can suppose such to be taken—out of the top of the mountain.

There are many legends related by the peasantry connected with this 'Devil's Bit.' The most current appears to be that the devil was at one time severely chastised by Saint Patrick, and in his anger and rage he seized the piece of rock in question in his mouth, and 'taking a bite out of the mountain as a child would out of a cake,' he was about to hurl the rock at the head of the saint. But the latter perceived his design, and raising his celebrated staff or crozier,

he threatened to smite Satan therewith. One blow of this staff would have sent him to the bottomless pit. At the sight of the crozier the devil fled, with the rock still in his mouth, and being chased through the air by St. Patrick, he was compelled to let it fall, when it dropped on the rich plains of Tipperary, and now forms the Rock of Cashel. St. Patrick then blessed the rock he had forced from the devil's mouth, lest it should damage the land where it fell; and soon after a church dedicated to the saint was built thereon, and it ultimately became the centre of one of the most celebrated ecclesiastical establishments in Ireland.

The ruins on the Rock of Cashel are still very beautiful, though they have fallen much into decay. But 'Cormac's Chapel' is almost as perfect as ever. It is supposed to have been built in the commencement of the tenth century by Cormac MacCarthy, King of Desmond or South Munster, and at the same time Archbishop of Cashel. The castle of the king is joined to the cathedral of the archbishop, and thus at the same time he assumed the offices of priest and king. The view from the tower, which is ascended by a spiral staircase of limestone, is one of the finest in Ireland—not so

much in picturesque beauty as in deep historic interest. Here stands 'Cashel of the Kings.'¹ Here were placed some of the early and most distinguished seats of learning in Ireland, the ruined abbeys of which are still visible scattered around its base, and from its towers can be obtained a bird's-eye view of that splendid tract of land called 'The Golden Vein of Ireland,' which rivals in richness and fertility the soil of any country in the world. It was no wonder that Cromwell, as he stood upon the heights of 'Cashel of the Kings,' exclaimed to his generals around him, 'No doubt this is a land worth fighting for;' and he fought for it and won it. But it has been fought for ever since.

At the base of the Kilnamanagh range of hills, extending from the Devil's Bit to the Keeper Mountains—a distance as the crow flies of some fourteen or fifteen miles—a small cabin might be seen nestling near a mountain rivulet. It belonged to a man named Murtagh O'Brien.

¹ A list of sixty-nine 'Kings of Cashel,' with the periods during which each of them reigned, is given by Mr. White in his interesting publication called 'Cashel of the Kings,' extracted from 'The Kings of the Race of Eibhear,' a chronological poem by John O'Dugan. O'Dugan died in 1372. The poem was written in Irish, and was translated by Michael Kearney in 1635.

His family had once been wealthy and well-to-do farmers in the district. But, partly from indisposition to steady labour, and partly from a tendency to intemperance, they had sunk lower and lower in the world, until at last nothing remained but this small cabin and about four or five acres of land. Murtagh was an only son, and he inherited the vices and the passions of his father, as well as his cabin and his 'little bit of land.' Like many of his countrymen, he preferred listening to the tales which his father told him of the ancient glories of Ireland, to the slow and more humble occupation of steady industry. His house was situated on high ground, with a breadth of the fertile valley lying between him and the Rock of Cashel. And when he heard of the glories of King Cormac, and the princely festivities which were held in those ancient palaces, and of the noble choirs which once poured forth their voices in the lofty vaults of the now ruined cathedral, he found it difficult to control his rage; and forgetting that one of his own name and lineage¹ was the most ruthless destroyer

¹ 'The Earl of Inchiquin was the lineal representative of the royal race of the O'Briens; but there was never a scourge of Ireland animated by a greater hatred of his

of this noble building and of the numerous priests who took refuge within its walls, he lashed himself into fury at the thought of how the Saxon stranger not only held the church, and castle, and the lands immediately around it, but also the rich fertile valley which lay between his dwelling place and the rock.

countrymen. Whether fighting for the King or the Parliament—and he changed sides more than once—he was invariably the bitter enemy of his countrymen, and the savage profaner of those religious edifices in which the ashes of his own ancestors reposed. His name is preserved in the traditions of Munster as the symbol of everything that is wicked and terrible. Nurses scare their children by the threat of calling *black Morough O'Brien*; and the superstitious peasant tells of the curse that he brought upon his family, and the failure of male heirs to the title of Inchiquin. When he stormed Cashel he pursued the fugitives into the splendid cathedral of that city, called from its situation The Rock; there he mercilessly slaughtered the unresisting multitude, and the blood of no less than twenty priests polluted the altars of the God of mercy.'—*Taylor's Civil Wars of Ireland*, p. 295.

Mr. White, in his 'Cashel of the Kings,' maintains that the twenty priests and others were smothered or baked in the castle with fire placed at the door; and Haverty, in his 'History of Ireland,' says: 'This degenerate descendant of the great Brian rivalled the most sanguinary of the Puritan generals in the cruelties which he executed upon his Catholic countrymen; and in the traditions of the peasantry his name was long preserved as "Murrough of the Burnings."'—*Haverty*, p. 527.

Murtagh's wife, as so often happens in Ireland, had far more common sense than her husband. She took a plain practical view of matters, and frequently reproached him with neglecting his farm and seeking the company of idle, and worse than idle, companions. But it was all in vain. Her husband loved company and he loved drink, and the two combined rendered the dwelling place of Murtagh O'Brien well known as dangerous ground—in fact, little else than a Ribbon lodge.

Nor did Murtagh stand alone amongst the peasantry of Tipperary in the feelings and sympathies which had taken such deep root in his mind. Living in the very heart of that magnificent country, a vast proportion of which had been parcelled out amongst the officers and soldiers of Cromwell in payment of wages which were their due,¹ the ancient native race could scarcely behold with patience the land of their fathers thus occupied by these greedy 'adventurers.' For two hundred years they have fretted and gnashed their teeth under the yoke; sometimes bursting out into open revolt, but more frequently exhibiting their undying hatred of the Saxon settlers by that restless spirit of

¹ Prendergast's 'Cromwellian Settlement.'

opposition to the law, for which Tipperary has long been famous.¹ Frequent murders, and desperate attacks on the persons of obnoxious individuals, have long prevailed in Tipperary ; and up to a very late period (if not up to the hour when these lines are being penned), several resident gentlemen of the county never left their houses unattended by policemen, whose duty it was to keep them constantly in view whilst out about their farms or grounds !

Such has long been the strange position of that splendid county. In other districts, where the land was less fertile and the original population less bold and daring, the ‘undertakers’ of Elizabeth and the ‘adventurers’ of Cromwell have had a more peaceful victory ; but in ‘gallant Tipperary’—as the people love to call it—the old land-war is by no means dead, even now ; and the numerous recent murders still testify—to use Cromwell’s own expression—that ‘the land is worth fighting for.’²

¹ The election of a convicted felon, O’Donovan Rossa, to represent Tipperary in Parliament at the last general election, is perhaps the most remarkable instance of the spirit which pervades the peasantry of that county even up to the present day.

² The peasantry of Tipperary are at present a mixed race. The original Cromwellian settlers soon became en-

Murtagh O'Brien and his great friend and sympathiser, Cormac O'Carroll, were deeply impressed with these views. Scarcely a new purchase of an estate took place, or a farm was amoured of the beauty of the Irish girls around them, and freely intermarried with them. These most attractive and seductive wives were not long in inducing their husbands to change their religion and adopt their Celtic feelings; so that they soon became, as the Strongbowians had done five hundred years before, 'more Irish than the Irish themselves.' The result of these marriages, as a general rule, is the Tipperary peasantry of the present day. They have adopted to the full extent the Celtic love of land, and that undefined feeling, traceable to the original tribal system, that it is not just, under any circumstances, to deprive a man of his land. And when this feeling is united or mixed with the fierce doggedness and courage of the old Cromwellian settler, we have as formidable and unsubdued a specimen of the human race as perhaps exists in the world. The gentlemen of Tipperary are many of them the successors of the officers of Cromwell, who were allotted lands in that fine county, and who increased their possessions by purchasing the debentures of those private soldiers who declined to settle in Ireland. And I need scarcely say that these also are as courageous and obstinate a race of men as any which exist in the world; so that I believe Chief Justice Dogherty was perfectly justified in a statement I once heard him make at dinner, after trying a murder case at Nenagh, that 'nothing could exceed the recklessness of life which prevailed amongst the peasantry of Tipperary—*except*,' he added, 'except that which prevails amongst the gentry.'

A large proportion of the original Cromwellian settlers

re-let to a new tenant, that they did not feel aggrieved, as if another link was broken which bound the ancient race to the soil, and as if their claim to repossess the lands of their forefathers—to recover in fact the forfeited estates—was thus removed one step further off. Many were the consultations held between them at their several houses, surrounded by their admirers and sympathisers, as to how matters could be changed in their favour.

They could not but feel that on every occasion when land changed hands an additional difficulty arose. And they also perceived, with the quickness of an Irish peasant, that on every occasion where a new landlord came to reside amongst them, the ancient race became more and more separated from the soil. It is the fashion to wonder at the difficulties and dangers which beset the path of the improving resident landlord in almost every county of Ireland; but those who do so forget that in every new-comer, and especially in every improving resident, the long-cherished dream of Ireland receives an

still remain, as they describe it, 'Protestant to the backbone,' and are amongst the most loyal supporters of English rule in Ireland. *The mixed race form the 'dangerous classes' in Tipperary.*

additional shock ; and the hope of the recovery of the forfeited estates is removed further and further back. These feelings and sentiments—so plainly revealed to those who have lived much amongst the people—will explain to the statesman who is not wilfully blind the strange inconsistencies which exist amongst the peasantry of Ireland. He will see how it comes to pass that a people so justly celebrated for hospitality, kindness, gentleness, and affection, can yet frequently imbrue their hands in blood, and obtain the sympathy of their companions in these atrocious crimes. A knowledge of the history of Ireland will explain these seeming contradictions. The usurpation of her lands by her English conquerors for the last seven hundred years—from the times of Strongbow, Elizabeth, James, and Cromwell, down to the present day, and the terrible penal laws which were enacted to maintain their possession, have not yet been obliterated from the minds of the Irish peasantry.

‘You are something late to-night,’ said Murtagh O’Brien, as his friend Cormac entered his cabin on a night appointed for a special meeting. ‘What kept ye so long? Nothing gone wrong, I hope?’

‘There’s plenty gone wrong,’ replied Cormac angrily. ‘I have just heard for sartain that the new young Saxon landlord is coming here to visit his estate, and there’s no saying what will come next. Tom Duffy the bailiff says that he is mad for building and draining and all sorts of improvements, as he calls them; and that he’ll give plenty of labour, and set money stirring in the country. But shure we all know what that means. Sorra less than squarin’ fields, and throwin’ down ancient boundaries, puttin’ one man in, and another out, and changin’ the face of the country so that no man could tell its ancient form. That’s what these innovatin’ landlords call improvements. Down with all such improvements, say I, and my curse on the landlord that brings them in!’

The audience to whom this angry speech was addressed consisted of some half-dozen leaders of the discontented class of peasantry of the district. Murtagh O’Brien had called them together to deliberate on the state of the country in general, and more particularly with reference to a rumour which had lately been circulated, that Lord Killarney intended shortly to visit and reside on his estate in that locality. He was generally reported to be a high-minded

English nobleman, liberal, and even generous, but to have a strong desire for the improvement of that district in which he had so great an interest, and which had been so long neglected. It was true he had not yet declared his plans, but the questions he had asked his agent, and which the agent referred to Tom Duffy the bailiff, led to the supposition that his lordship was both anxious and willing to undertake extensive improvements on his property.

The speech which Cormac had made on his entering the cabin of O'Brien, and the bitter tone in which it was uttered, produced a profound sensation upon the listeners; and a general muttered hum of dissatisfaction was the result. None of the party spoke, as if waiting to hear what Murtagh O'Brien had to say.

'And what does the agent say to all this?' asked Murtagh. 'Is he for or against it, did ye hear?'

'Tom Duffy says the agent is agin' it, body and bones,' replied Cormac. 'He says we are well enough as we are, and there's no use in disturbing the country; and that he has told his lordship no good will come of it if he goes on.'

'Begorra he says the truth,' replied Murtagh.

‘Sure he knows the country well, and what the people want just now is to be let alone. Mr. Snugg is a sensible man, and faix he’s in the right to keep a whole skin on his body.’

‘It’s not him that’s doin’ it,’ continued Cormac. ‘They say it’s all the young lord himself. But faix I’m thinkin’ Tom Duffy the bailiff is puttin’ him up to it on the sly. Old Snugg is very well as he is, but Tom’s a knowin’ chap, and maybe he thinks that in all the changes that will be goin’ on, he may come in for a bit more land himself. That’s what the people says, and I’m thinkin’ they are not so far wrong.’

‘By the powers,’ exclaimed Black Hugh McShane, ‘but if I thought Tom Duffy was goin’ on that way, I wouldn’t mind havin’ a slap at him myself. What right has he that ought to be on the people’s side to be puttin’ up a new landlord to be disturbin’ them in their ancient homes? Sure we are bad enough as we are, and why make us worse with all their improvements as they call them? Do they want to improve us out of the country altogether?’

‘Ye are right there,’ replied Murtagh; ‘ye are right there, Black Hugh, if ye never spoke truth before. And I’ll tell ye what’s more, boys,

we must put a stop to this ; we won't stand it, and there's nothin' like beginnin' early. And if Tom Duffy goes on with his tricks we'll show him the rights of it in a way he won't overlike.'

'True for ye,' said Cormac, 'and so every one of us thinks. But stay awhile ; wait till we see whether it is true or not. They say the young lord will soon be here, and then we'll know all about it. Give him and the rest of them fair play anyway in the beginnin'. They say there was quare work the other day at the assizes, and that they made mortal fun out of the young lord ; and they say also that Teague O'Hanlon, your own cousin, Murtagh, leapt out of the dock and got clean away before them all. It's reported too that the young lord helped him his best, and faix if that be true, he can't be so bad after all.'

'Ah, then, where did ye hear all that?' exclaimed Murtagh, rising with excitement. 'Is it lies you're tellin', or is there any truth in it at all?'

The storm had risen outside, and the door had been securely fastened, a blazing fire of bog-wood lit up the room within, and plenty of drink was on the table—when, just as the last speaker concluded, a loud knocking was heard at the door.

There was silence for a moment inside, when the knocking being repeated, Murtagh O'Brien said—

‘I suppose it’s the Peelers comin’ to look after us, but faix they may do their worst this turn, for sorra ha’p’orth they’ll find here that will do us any harm. Cormac, open the door.’

Cormac unbolted the door, and, to the surprise of everyone, a stranger walked into the room alone. He was travel-stained from head to foot, evidently much fatigued, and thoroughly drenched with the rain. He stood for a moment on the threshold, half-blinded by the brilliant light of the bog-wood which was blazing on the hearth.

‘God save all here!’ he said, as he stepped into the room. ‘Is one Murtagh O’Brien among ye, boys? I’m told this is his house.’

‘By the powers it’s Teague O’Hanlon!’ exclaimed Murtagh, and pressing forward, he welcomed the new comer with a hearty shake of the hand. ‘Teague, my boy, it’s a long time since I seen ye, but by all the saints in the calendar ye are welcome as the flowers of May. They say ye got into trouble, Teague, but bedad if you did, ye seem to have got out of it purty quick again. Tell us all about it. But first sit

down and take something, for the night's mighty seavare.'

Teague's countenance brightened up at this warm reception from his kinsman. He had entered the room with doubts upon his mind as to how he might be received. He knew he was a fugitive from the law ; but he forgot that that alone—had there been no other recommendation—would have secured him a welcome from Murtagh O'Brien in Tipperary.

Teague's supper was soon prepared—hot roasted potatoes and eggs, with plenty of milk and butter—the whole washed down with 'lashins' of whisky punch. He was then called on to tell his tale, and this he did clearly and well ; and having done so, he was at once admitted into the fraternity as one 'outside the English law,' and therefore welcome to 'all true Irishmen.'

Murtagh O'Brien was not long in explaining to his visitor the special purpose for which they had that night met. How they dreaded the innovations of the young lord who was expected soon to visit his estate in that locality, and how important it was to prevent him from undertaking those improvements which it was reported he was resolved to enter on. He also explained

to him how he suspected Tom Duffy the bailiff of supporting the views and intentions of the landlord for his own ends and objects.

Teague heard all their grievances and suspicions to the end, and then asked what they were going to do.

‘Why then, that’s what we don’t know ourselves,’ said Murtagh. ‘We must put a stop to these innovations anyhow, for as sure as you’re there, once they begin, they will never end until some of us are improved out of the place altogether. But how to stop them we don’t yet know. Maybe we could frighten the young lord out of it, and send him back, quiet and ’asy to England where he came from ; and as to Tom Duffy, why we wouldn’t be long settling him if we went about it.’

‘Bedad then, if it’s thinking of frightening the young lord ye are,’ said Teague, ‘ye never were more mistaken. Sure wasn’t I with him when he bet the best man of the O’Gallivans at the pattern, and I hear tell how he afterwards fought young O’Dempsey with pistols, and he the best shot in Kerry. Take him fair and ’asy and ye can make some hand of him, but if once ye go to frighten him ye may give up, for it will only make him stay the longer.’

‘Maybe we’d make him stay long enough and longer than he’d like,’ said Black Hugh, ‘if that’s the sort of man he is. An ounce of lead in his gizzard would keep him quiet and ’asy for many a day to come.’

‘None of your talk that way,’ replied Teague indignantly. ‘We don’t shoot people down in the country I come from, barrin’ a few gentlemen when their blood’s up that takes a shot at each other of an odd time, just in a friendly way, to shake hands on it afterwards if nobody happens to be killed; but I won’t stand by and hear bad work plotted against the young lord, for a better man or truer friend never came over from England.’

‘In troth then I don’t know what brought ye here at all,’ said Black Hugh. ‘I suppose just now ye’ll be standin’ up for the agent or the bailiff himself. We don’t want the likes of ye among us at all.’

‘Ye may shoot the agent or the bailiff either,’ replied Teague, ‘for all I care—so ye don’t ask me to have act or part in it. But I’ll never stand by and see a hair in the head of the young lord singed if I had to defend him with my own life.’

‘What are ye talkin’ of down there?’ broke

in Murtagh angrily ; ‘ whose talkin’ of shootin’ ? All we want is to put a stop to the innovations, and sure this might be done without killin’ any one at all.’

The party now set themselves seriously to consider the best mode of putting a stop to the projected improvements ; and it was settled to take no step whatever until the landlord’s plans were fully developed, and then to adopt rigorous measures, whether by threatening Tom Duffy, or even by a more determined course, to put a stop to the projected changes. But it was agreed on all hands not to interfere with Mr. Snugg the agent, who appeared to be decidedly opposed to any changes or improvements whatsoever.

Teague now found himself in altogether a different atmosphere from that which he had been accustomed to in Kerry, and one not at all congenial to his feelings. He could heartily sympathise with the Phoenix boys, in their marching and drilling, and desire, as he thought, to free Ireland by the sword ; but threatening notices and murder were new to him, and he shrank from them with horror and detestation. He resolved, however, to remain in the country a little longer, if it was for no other purpose than to watch over the safety of the

young lord, towards whom he felt the warmest affection.

Not many days after the conversation above described, it was reported in the country that the youthful Earl of Killarney had arrived on a visit to a gentleman residing only a few miles distant from his estate; from this he hoped to see his property in person, there being no suitable residence at present on the lands.

On the morning after his arrival, Mr. Snugg—attended by the bailiff Tom Duffy—proceeded to wait upon his lordship, and welcome him in the name of the tenants.

‘Had your lordship only given us a little notice beforehand,’ said Mr. Snugg, ‘the tenants would have insisted on drawing you in themselves; and bonfires, tar-barrels, and fireworks would have blazed from the Devil’s Bit to Borris-o-leigh, and from that to the Keeper Mountain. They will all be quite vexed that your lordship should have given them no opportunity of showing their joy on your arrival.’

‘I am much obliged,’ returned the Earl, ‘to my tenants for their friendly feelings towards me, especially as I have had no opportunity as yet of showing any kindness to them. I trust before long to visit every one of them myself,

and to enter upon an extensive course of improvements in draining their land, and building better residences for themselves and families, as I am told many of them have but very indifferent houses.'

'Bedad your lordship,' said Mr. Snugg, 'the houses are not so bad. They are well content with them, just as they stand at present. It's little any of them wants at all. And as to the land, why ye see the summers here are mighty dry some seasons, and a little moisture in the land is mighty good for the stock. It wouldn't do to lave the land without any sap in it at all.'

'Upon my word, Mr. Snugg, you surprise me,' said the Earl. 'If I understand you aright, you desire neither drainage nor buildings to be undertaken on the estate. Pray may I ask is everything so perfect on my property that nothing whatever is necessary to be done to improve it?'

'Well now, my lord,' said Mr. Snugg, 'I wouldn't exactly say that. There is many a thing might be done that would make matters better than they are. But the times is bad, my lord, and the people are uneasy, and there is wild talk going on amongst them, and if your lordship takes my advice, ye will just let them

alone, and not interfere with them at all at present, and they will pay your rent fair and 'asy when they can, and when they can't, sure your lordship couldn't expect it, for how can a man do what he isn't able to do?'

'Well certainly, Mr. Snugg, you don't give one much encouragement in prosecuting the designs which I can truly say lie nearest my heart—the improvement of my Irish estates and the habits and condition of the people residing on them. Can you yourself suggest anything to be done, for it is strange indeed if nothing ought to be undertaken in a district where there has never been a resident landlord, and where a shilling has not been expended on the property for a hundred years or more?'

'Well now, my lord, it's all very fair for ye to speak that way, and I don't blame your lordship at all. And I'm sure ye speak well and true, and out of the kindness of your own heart towards the tenants; but I know their feelin's better than your lordship can, and I tell no lie when I say, that if ye want to please them ye will do just nothing at all. Lave them alone, and don't be meddlin' with their ways, barrin' a trifle of blankets and coals to the poor when the winter comes round, and ye will have the

blessin' of the people more than if ye drained and built until ye broke your heart.'

'Well, certainly, you *are* a difficult people to understand,' replied the Earl. 'But tell me, Mr. Snugg, is there any vacant spot of land to be had on my estate on which I could build a residence? I am ashamed to have no place into which I can put my head beyond the lowest class of thatched cabin. I should not want much land—say one or two hundred acres, which is not much out of some fifteen or twenty thousand. I suppose you could easily manage to get me so much should I require it?'

'Hem—eh,' replied Mr. Snugg. 'Of course, my lord, if you *require* it, the land must be got. But it is not quite so easy as you may suppose.'

'Well, really,' replied the Earl, 'this is altogether very hard. I come to Ireland with the fullest intention of doing all I can to benefit my tenants, who have, I will not deny it, a just right to complain that hitherto nothing has been done for them, and no money spent in the country. I am desirous to build a residence, and to reside at least a portion of the year amongst them, and I am told that not so much as one hundred acres can be got on the whole

estate, though I am willing to pay anything in reason to the tenant in occupation for the inconvenience of giving it up. And finally I am told that the tenants, who from all I have heard from others are a class living in the lowest scale that human beings could or ought to live, are only anxious to be allowed to go on as they are—that they desire neither draining, nor building, nor any other improvement; and though you don't exactly say so, I am given pretty clearly to understand that my presence is not by any means desirable, and that the sooner I take myself back to England from whence I came, the better for all parties concerned !'

'My lord,' said Mr. Snugg, 'I will not deny that there is much truth in what you say. It may seem all very strange to you, and I am not surprised that it should be so. But I should only deceive your lordship if I led you to believe otherwise than what I have stated. I have lived amongst the people all my life, and I know their ways and their thoughts. I will not say they are good ways or good thoughts, but there they are; and no man who knows this country can deny it. On this estate no one has been disturbed—no changes of any kind

have been made; the people pay their rents as they can, there is little or no arrear, and all has been peace and quiet. Not an outrage has taken place on the property, whilst all around us murders, and waylayings, and every species of agrarian disturbances have occurred. I will not say we are in an advanced position, for we are not, but the people are satisfied, and *there is peace*. It is for your lordship to say whether you will disturb this peace or not. I should only deceive you did I not tell you that if you begin to drain, and build, and improve, to square farms, and enlarge fields, and, above all, if you want to take up land to build a residence for yourself, you will open a mine of agrarian outrage which a generation may not be able to close. Ask any of the gentlemen around—many of whom have been themselves fired at, whilst their friends and neighbours have been barbarously murdered—whether I speak the truth or not. They will not for a moment deny it. Your lordship can now choose what you will do. Whether you will leave the people as they are, ignorant I admit, degraded even if you will have it so, ill-housed, and ill-fed, but peaceable, quiet, and contented; or will you enter on a course of improvement,

squaring of fields, enlarging of farms, and building farm-houses and cottages, and thereby raising a nest of hornets around you whose animosity may be fatal, and whose sting may, perhaps, be death.'

'I will think over this, Mr. Snugg,' replied the Earl, 'before I take any step in advance. I believe you mean well, and I doubt not you have spoken the truth. To me it is most strange, but everything is strange in Ireland, and to an English mind the inconsistencies and contradictions are irreconcilable. But we must take Ireland—at least, we must begin with it—as we find it. And I have learnt that many of these apparent inconsistencies can be fairly accounted for if we only trace them to their source. Farewell for the present; in a few days I hope to see you again, when I shall let you know my ultimate resolution.' Mr. Snugg bowed low and retired, and the bailiff, Tom Duffy, also withdrew.

The gentleman at whose house Lord Killarney was staying lived not very far from the base of the Devil's Bit Mountains. It was a very beautiful and much improved demesne, and both house and grounds were kept in the highest state of order and preservation. The

Earl returned to his host evidently much discomfited, and when dinner was over and the two friends were seated at a comfortable fire, and with their wine before them, the Earl related all the particulars of the conversation he had held with his agent that day.

‘Mr. Snugg has told you nothing but the truth,’ replied Mr. Hardon—for that was the gentleman’s name. ‘If you want to live in peace in Ireland, or at least in Tipperary, you must “*let be*”—you must leave people alone as they are. If you attempt to improve, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, and to make your estate either look or be respectable, your people comfortable, their farms well arranged, their land drained, and their houses decent and commodious, you must be prepared to go through an ordeal which few men are willing to face.’

‘I should be quite willing to face it,’ replied the Earl, ‘if I thought I was likely to do real good thereby. But what puzzles me is why all attempts to do good, or at least what would be termed good in England, are here met with the most determined and bloodthirsty opposition.’

‘We Irish understand all that,’ said Mr. Hardon. ‘But you must look far back for its explanation. We have acquired the land by

conquest, and every improvement made upon it, every alteration which in any way defaces its original condition, is looked upon with jealousy as removing old landmarks, and putting further and further off the chances of its ultimate recovery. "Leave us and our land alone," is the universal cry over almost all Celtic Ireland. The forfeited estates will be more easily recovered if left in their natural state, and besides all that, wherever there is improvement, there is apt to be *consolidation of farms*. And if there is one thing in the world an Irishman hates, it is—consolidation.'

'And do the people in this country really believe that these forfeited estates can ever be actually recovered?' asked the Earl.

'Undoubtedly they do,' replied Mr. Hardon. 'I know it from a hundred different sources. Wild and foolish as the idea is, it has taken deep root, and nothing less than another century of occupation, or some revolutionary land-bill, will altogether obliterate it.'

'Then,' said the Earl sadly, 'it appears I must prepare for death, if I resolve to improve my estate?'

'It pretty nearly comes to that,' replied Mr. Hardon. 'You must leave the land and the

people alone in this country, or you have scarcely a chance of your life.'

'And how have you escaped?' enquired the Earl. 'Your house and grounds and all around you for miles seem to be the acme of perfection.'

'Few would willingly run the risks that I have run,' replied Mr. Hardon smiling. 'They call me "Wild-duck Hardon," because I have been so often fired at. I will frankly confess to you that it is possible I may have carried matters a little too far. When first I came of age I found my land was let almost up to my hall-door. I naturally required possession of my grounds. But in doing so I was met by threats, and when these did not succeed, by actual attempts on my life. This roused my temper. I was determined not to give in, and so it appeared were the people. They fought me step by step at law, and when I beat them at that, they tried to shoot me on every opportunity they could. Acts like these, I confess, led to reprisals on my part. I became almost reckless, and feeling that I had been unjustly treated in the beginning, I resolved to evict almost every tenant on my estate. I carried out this system, more as a matter of pride because I would not yield to threats, and a

desire for victory, than for any personal advantage to myself. Perhaps, if all was to be done over again, I should act somewhat differently.'

'Considering the boldness of the Tipperary peasantry,' observed the Earl, 'and their determination to retain possession of the land at any cost, I only wonder how you escaped.'

'My escapes were almost miraculous,' replied Mr. Hardon, 'and the more I think over them, the more wonderful they appear to myself. One of them may interest you to hear. I had dined at a friend's house some three or four miles distant; and whilst there I received private information that I should be attacked on my return home. I drove home in an open carriage, my servant only beside me. My friend urged me to remain all night at his house, but to this I would on no account consent. During the whole time of my drive home I sat with my double-barrelled gun cocked and resting on my knee, determined to fire the moment I saw any attempt to molest me. None, however, happened on the road, and I reached my own gate in safety. At the gate I was compelled to stop, in order to give the gatekeeper time to open it, when suddenly, just as I was about to move on through the open way, two shots were fired in

rapid succession. One of these struck my servant and wounded him slightly, the other struck the hinder part of my horse, who, being a spirited animal, dashed off at full speed down the approach towards the house. The moment the shots were fired, two men rushed out from behind the piers of the gate and endeavoured to seize the horse's head, in which they would certainly have succeeded had not the peppering the poor beast got behind, with large shot and slugs, sent him off at uncontrollable speed. Had they succeeded in stopping the horse, I should have had but a poor chance of my life, as of course they would have poured in their shot at close quarters, when they could not possibly miss me. I may therefore attribute my safety to the spur the horse received from their own shot.'

'And how did you stop the horse?' asked the Earl.

'I was wholly unable to stop him,' replied Mr. Hardon, 'and moreover the servant who was wounded did not well know what he was doing, and between us we dragged the horse off the gravel in upon the grass. Here we went full speed at a small drain which the horse took in stroke, and, as may be supposed, we were

both hurled with violence out of the vehicle. I lit on the grass with the gun still in my hand ; I was not hurt in the least. My first impulse was to run back to the gate, and try if I could get a shot at some of my assailants. I stole cautiously up, but could see no one. At length I thought I saw a man standing against the wall of the gate lodge, so I took deliberate aim and fired. The figure did not stir, whereon I ran up to the spot, and found that I had fired at a long narrow window, which in the dark I had mistaken for a man. My bullet had pierced the glass right in the centre of the window. Next morning I went to examine matters more closely, and I found that the bullet had entered the room where an old man slept, who was well known to me, and it had struck inside the wall only a few inches over his head. The man's life, it happened, was in a lease against me, and I really believe that to this day, not only he, but the people, are convinced that I fired at him intentionally ?¹

‘ Well, certainly,’ observed the Earl, when Mr. Hardon had finished his story, ‘ this kind of life is more wild and adventurous than pleasant.

¹ I have related the story as told to me by the gentleman to whom the occurrence happened.—W. S. T.

Can you remember any other case in which you had a narrow escape?’

‘I could tell you of several,’ replied Mr. Hardon, ‘but they would only weary you. I will tell you of one, however, in which I was *not* fired at. I was dining at the same friend’s house to which I before referred, and I went, as usual, with my gun and pistols carefully loaded and prepared. My servant, being accustomed to these things, was in the habit of taking my arms into the house on my arrival, to preserve them from damp and all danger of being tampered with. When the dinner party broke up—about twelve o’clock at night—I ordered my gig as usual, but you may imagine my dismay when my servant informed me that he had forgotten to take my arms into the house, and they had all bodily disappeared! I had some reason to believe that my servant had not acted quite fairly by me in this matter; at all events it was suspicious, and certainly he was much to blame for not having secured the arms as usual. Of course my friends, one and all, besought me to remain with them that night, but to this I would not consent; so I borrowed my friend’s arms, and having carefully loaded a pair of double-barrelled pistols and a gun, I started for

home at nearly one o'clock in the morning. It was a moonlight, but somewhat cloudy night, and as my servant had played me so disagreeable a trick, I resolved to pay him off by *placing him on the seat which I usually occupied myself*, and which, being the driving seat, was somewhat higher than the other. He trembled like a leaf when I made him get up there, but there was no help for it, as I swore I would shoot him if he hesitated. We were not attacked on the road, but the servant was in such a fright that he was near upsetting me two or three times, being almost unconscious of what he was doing. The moment we stopped at the gate I jumped down, leaving him as a sort of cock-shot to his friends during the delay of opening it. But this was not all. I resolved not to mount the vehicle again, but to walk a little behind the gig myself, and insisting that the wretched man should drive on in a slow walk all up the dark avenue, and swearing I would shoot him on the spot if he hesitated or broke into a trot. I made him traverse the whole length from the gate to the house in a walk, and an easy cock-shot for any Ribbonman who chose to take him down. When he arrived at the house he was

really more dead than alive ! He never left my arms behind him after that.’¹

‘You certainly have had a lively life of it,’ said the Earl. ‘Good night ; I must think over all this before I enter on such a war.’

‘Good night,’ returned Mr. Hardon laughing, ‘and pleasant dreams to your lordship.’

¹ See note, p. 52.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEVIL'S BIT.

LORD KILLARNEY had now become domesticated for a week or ten days at Mr. Hardon's, and each day he rode to his estate, resolved to make himself thoroughly acquainted, not only with the land but with the people. His agent, Mr. Snugg, was very much what his name implied—a quiet, easy, well-to-do man, who, by patient industry and a talent for trimming his sails to meet every breeze, and taking care never to shake out more canvas than he was able to carry, had acquired a comfortable independence. He was low-born, honest, upright, and just ; knew every man on the estate, and indeed in the whole country round, by his christian name ; was a capital judge of stock, and provided he sent my lord a fair account of his rent-roll, and reasonable remittances every half-year, he cared as little for the appearance of things on Lord Killarney's estate as he did for the appearance

of his own farmyard. Under these circumstances, all who are well acquainted with Ireland can understand that he was well liked by the people. He never crossed their inclinations in any way. They might marry and subdivide as much as they pleased. There was no hindrance whatever to the boy of eighteen taking his sweetheart of seventeen to the priest, getting the matrimonial knot tied, fixing up a thatched shed against the end of the stable for a room to live in—‘what would they want with more when they were only just married?’—and passing the rest of their lives in easy indolence and poverty, but with that greatest of all human blessings abounding in their hearts—practical peace, and contentment with their lot, and a good theoretical grievance.

Nor did Mr. Snugg trouble himself much, because swarms of paupers from off other estates had free liberty to settle upon that of Lord Killarney. And a thriving trade in this line was carried on by several of the farmers. It usually happened that when a family were from any cause compelled to leave their former residence, they carried away some little money with them—given them either through the kindness or the fears of the landlord who wished

to get rid of them. These men were always sure of a location on Lord Killarney's estate. And many of the farmers had received large sums from these unhappy people for leave to erect a mud cabin near a ditch, and settle down in life with only a 'potato garden' to support them.

Such was the condition of the estate, sunk in poverty, indolence, and idleness; the people uneducated, without comfort, and without refinement. And such was the neglectful but kind-hearted and popular agent, Mr. Snugg—highly approved of by the tenantry in general, whom he had gradually allowed to settle down into a condition not very far removed from some of the inferior animals. It may well be imagined with what pain and grief the young owner of this vast estate viewed its miserable condition. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw his ragged tenantry, and was told that it was from such as these that he derived his income, and he longed to put his hand in his pocket and give a crown or a sovereign to each of them, rather than think of requiring rent from a people such as this. His first enquiry naturally was, whether the rents were not too high?

'Not at all, your lordship,' said Mr. Snugg;

'the rents are mighty low. There is not a man in the country let's his land so low as your lordship. Ask the tenants themselves. They ought to be good judges, and see what they will say.'

The young nobleman resolved to do so, and riding out next day he happened to see a man sitting leisurely on a bank mending his spade. Beside him sat his wife with a bit of cotton cloth in her hands, which she was working up into a pinafore for one of the girls; and the children, of whom there were five or six in regular gradations of size, were playing about them in a state of almost absolute nudity.

'This is a fine day for the potato-digging, my man,' said the Earl as he rode up; 'it is a pity to lose it, and you don't seem to be very busy.'

'Sure, ain't I mendin' my spade?' replied the man, who evidently had not the least idea who the stranger was; 'ain't I mendin' my spade? and after dinner, please God, I'll set to, and dig a few of the praties.'

'I think you had better commence and do it now,' observed the stranger. 'Your spade doesn't seem to have had much the matter with it, and at all events it is all right now. It wants a good hour to dinner-time yet. Why don't you go dig, the weather is now so fine?'

‘Och! sure it’s time enough,’ replied the man. ‘I’ll engage there’ll be plenty of fine weather before us yet.’

‘Upon my word you take it easy,’ said the Earl, ‘and yet if I may judge from appearances you cannot be very wealthy. Tell me—I should be glad to know—are you pretty well off or not?’

‘Well now, I’m not to say as well off as I could wish, and yet I’m not so bad either,’ replied the man.

‘Are your rents high?’ asked the Earl.

‘Bedad they’re not,’ said the man. ‘I won’t tell your honour a lie about it, as I’m sure you’re a gentleman born, though I don’t know who ye are. There is no use in denying it, we have the land for the value under the young lord.’

‘And do all the tenants think that?’ asked the Earl, ‘or is it only of yourself you speak?’

‘Oh faix there’s not one of the tenants can complain on that score,’ replied the man. ‘Whatever right they have to complain of anything else, they have no right to complain of the rint. Sure it’s not much more nor half what the other gentlemen in the country gets.’

‘And yet the estate of the young lord, as you

call him, is the most impoverished and wretched-looking estate I have yet seen in Ireland,' said the Earl. 'Can you explain all this to me?'

'Bedad I don't know,' replied the man. 'But maybe it's not so bad as it looks. Ye see the young lord, nor his agent, Mr. Snugg, has never bothered the tenants with this and that regulation like other gentlemen. Everybody may just do as they please on this property, and sure that's a blessin' worth having. Them that likes to work can work, and them that doesn't needn't. That's the way of it. There's Lord Harrass and Mr. Tightman, and the divil such work as they go on with worryin' their tenants' lives out. Not that the land's dear with them either, but this tenant must whitewash his house—inside and outside, no less—as if a man hadn't a right to keep his own house as he liked himself; and then they must clean up their "water courses," as they call them, and sow turnips and clover, and the likes of them "green crops," as if every man didn't know what suited himself best. Such work ye never seen. But it's not so with our young lord. Bedad, he just lets us go our own ways, and sure we know what we likes best ourselves, and long life to his honour and lordship for that same.'

The Earl turned away, distressed and yet amused at the reasons for his own popularity, and bidding the man good morning, he rode on his way—in truth, sorrowful enough.

What was he to do? Day by day the difficulties of his position rose more and more before him. Was he to return to England and abandon the estate to the management of Mr. Snugg as heretofore, leaving everything alone to remain in peace, poverty, and degradation; or was he to enter upon any course of improvements which might disturb the present order of things, and bring dissatisfaction to the people, cost to himself, and perhaps even bloodshed and murder?

After many days' anxious consideration, he resolved he could not leave matters as they were; and be the consequences what they might, he would at least make the attempt to raise his tenantry from the abject condition in which he found them.

He called Mr. Snugg to his aid, and told him all his plans. How he was willing to expend many thousands yearly on the improvement of his estate, and for the advantage of the tenants on it. That he was ready to build, and drain, and improve their land in whatever way the

most skilled agriculturists would suggest, charging only a nominal interest of some two per cent. on the outlay, which he thought it desirable to do, though he would give all freely without any charge, if Mr. Snugg thought it right, sooner than leave things as they were. And he let Mr. Snugg fully understand that, come what would, he was determined on a change of system; and that, though he had no wish to remove a single family off the estate, yet if any were anxious to emigrate and thus make room for the establishment of larger holdings, he was willing to pay their whole expenses to America; or if they chose to remain, he would give them abundance of labour at the highest rate going in the country.

Mr. Snugg received the young Earl's announcement with good humour, but with evident dissatisfaction.

'Well, my lord,' he said, 'your bidding must be done, but it won't be so easy as you think. I suppose we must have printed placards posted up over the estate and signed by your lordship, stating what may be your intentions, and the advantages of which you propose that your tenants should avail themselves?'

'Precisely so,' replied the Earl. 'I will have

them carefully drawn up, and you will have them printed and posted, and we shall then see how they will work, and what the tenants think of them. I confess I shall be much surprised if they do not at once see that it will be for their advantage to adopt my plans.'

The Earl accordingly set to work, and with the assistance of one or two intelligent gentlemen in the neighbourhood, aided by Tom Duffy the bailiff, he drew up a complete code of regulations and rules—based on the most liberal principles—for draining wet land, improvement of cottages, building farm houses, clearing the land of rocks, levelling useless fences, and such like ; offering, at the same time, large prizes for turnips, mangolds, clover, and green crops, as well as live stock of every description. When all was ready he directed Tom Duffy to post the placards in different places over the estate.

To the amazement of Lord Killarney he found that on the very next day most of his placards were either defaced or torn down, and he was still more surprised when Tom Duffy called to say that his plans were received with the utmost dissatisfaction by the tenants, and that threats had already been used towards any

tenant who would venture to take advantage of them.

‘This is most marvellous,’ said the Earl to his friend Mr. Hardon, as they sat together after dinner. ‘I had made arrangements to expend some four thousand pounds this year on my estate, solely for the advantage of the tenantry; and here I have raised a nest of hornets about me by merely stating my wishes, and—as Tom Duffy says—as determined to sting as if I had threatened to clear every tenant off my estate.’

‘But don’t you see,’ said Mr. Hardon, ‘that that is the very thing they are afraid of? And not altogether without reason. They have witnessed, a hundred times over, the effect of these improvements and rules on other estates in the country. You wish to raise your tenantry, and to make them an active, enterprising, industrious, and improving set of men. And to effect this purpose you offer these premiums and rewards. But this necessarily involves the removal of those who are idle and lazy. These men don’t wish to be active and industrious, enterprising and improving. They don’t wish to be thriving at the cost of energy and hard labour. You have given them their land so cheap that they can pay their rent and live—that is, as *they*

live—without almost any trouble; and this being the case, they prefer poverty and idleness to industry and thrift. The majority, no doubt, may wish it otherwise, but they are overborne by the indolent and reckless, who would not hesitate to come down upon the industrious should they attempt to take advantage of your liberality.'

'Unhappy Ireland!' exclaimed the Earl. 'What is to be done?'

'Just go on with what you think right,' replied Mr. Hardon; 'allow neither anger, nor vexation, nor disappointment to sway you or turn you from your path; and in the end, you may depend on it, you will succeed. No doubt some of the worst and most indolent characters will have to move, for they will never turn to steady industry, and they will probably turn on you or your men and try either to frighten or murder you. It is so in Dublin, in Paris, and even in London, though shown in a different form. This is the true principle of trade unions. The reckless, the idle, and the dissatisfied always endeavour to overawe the quiet and industrious, and to press forward their views as the wishes and opinions of the majority. But on your estate the idle have had it all their own way

hitherto, and if once you can show your tenantry that you are resolved to encourage industry and thrift, you will have hundreds to support and stand by you.'

A conclave with very different sentiments and feelings held earnest council on the same subject, and on that same night, at the cabin of Murtagh O'Brien. No sooner had the placards been posted over the estate announcing the rules and regulations, and the premiums and prizes for the various improvements which the young lord was anxious to set on foot, than several were secretly torn down by Murtagh O'Brien and his friends, and they resolved to meet that night to discuss the subject in full. Murtagh's house was, as usual, appointed as the rendezvous; and here came Cormac O'Carroll, Black Hugh McShane, and several others, amongst whom Teague O'Hanlon, as the guest of Murtagh, was of course invited to take a part.

No sooner had they collected, and whisky been laid as usual upon the table, than Murtagh, with a gravity befitting the importance of the occasion, drew slowly from his breast-coat pocket a copy of the celebrated placard, and unfolding it with much deliberation he laid it on the table.

'Didn't I tell ye,' said he, 'how it would be?'

Didn't I tell ye that as soon as ever the young lord came to live here, he'd be for changin' the ould regulations that suited us all so well—squarin' the fields, and drainin' the lands, and enlargin' the farms until there would be no room in the country at all for the likes of you or me? We should have put a stop to it in the beginnin', so we should, and not waited till he got a footin' here at all. But that's all done and gone. There's the notice that he's goin' to commence; maybe it's not too late yet; and, boys, there's no use in talkin', we must do something before long, or all them that loves Ireland will be banished out of the place.'

There was a deep murmur of approbation as Murtagh stopped speaking; the men shifted on their seats, took each a glass of whisky—not a word being spoken all the time, and then all were quiet again.

Cormac was the next to speak.

'Murtagh spakes the truth, no doubt. It's not now we should be settlin' what's best to be done. We should have done it when first he came here, and we'd never see that ugly bit of paper before ye. There's not a sod, or a twig, or a field, or a spring-well, over the whole country round, that he doesn't know this minute; and

once he begins, you may depend on it he'll never stop until he improves the likes of us out of this place entirely. Now's your time, boys, say I; for once he gets into the heart of it, ye'll never stop him but with his life.'

'By the powers,' exclaimed Black Hugh, 'but even if it comes to that same we must and will stop him. Look how it is with Hardon at the Devil's Bit, where the young lord is stayin' this minute, and once he began did he lave one of the ould stock in the place? Look at the whole of them landlords round, and don't we see, ever and always, that once they begin with that work they keep movin' and shiftin' one man here, and another there, until they root out of the country all them that loves ould Ireland in their hearts. That's the way with them all. We want no man's blood, so we don't. But our blood is as red as his, and if one or other of us must come down, it may as well be him as us. But I say there's worse in it than the young lord himself. It's not ould Snugg, for he's a dacent crature that never did harm to any man; but it's Tom Duffy, so it is, that's puttin' him up to it all. Sure wasn't he present at the drawin' up of the paper, and wasn't it he that planned and posted it? Let us go at Tom Duffy first, and

we'll soon drive the young lord out of that before any worse comes of it.'

'Ye are right, Hugh,' said Murtagh, breaking in. 'If the worst comes to the worst, we'll make him step into his drains over the bloody corpse of Tom Duffy.'

'That's your sort,' exclaimed Cormac. 'The gallant boys of Tipperary will never be found short of their work.'

'As we are all agreed, the sooner it is done the better,' said Murtagh. 'But of course we must give the usual notice first. Who will we get to write it, for I'm no great hand at the pen myself?'

'Maybe Teague O'Hanlon would do that much for us,' observed Cormac; 'he hasn't given us much help as yet this blessed evening.'

'I'm no great hand at writin',' said Teague. 'And I'm not up to these things if I was.'

'Then I'll do it myself,' said Cormac. 'Murtagh, give us a pen an' ink, and if ye have a clane sheet of paper and a small spellin' dictionary beside ye, it might do no harm, as I'm not so fresh at my larnin' as I was some years ago.'

'Arrah, man! don't be too particular about that,' broke in Black Hugh. 'Better put it

purty rough, or maybe they'd think we wasn't in earnest.'

Cormac now set himself to the serious task of writing the warning notice ; but he found it no easy matter. He sat for some time thinking, and then struck with a sudden idea, he said, ' Bedad, I forgot. We must begin with a *Death's head and cross bones*. Boys, which of ye is any good at drawin' a picture?'

' Do it yourself, Cormac,' cried all the party ; ' there is not one of us can do it as well.'

Cormac accordingly began to draw, and after about ten minutes he produced a ' picture,' as he called it, and which he declared ' would frighten a horse from his oats !'

It was pronounced on all hands to be a good beginning, and then he proceeded with the notice, which ran as follows :—

' Thom. Dufy.—This is to give ye warnin' that if ye don't stop your present thricks, with yer drainin and bildin and improvin the pure tinants out of the place that was here before ye wor born ye may prepare yer coffin. we are the boys will lay you lo.

(Signed) ' RORY OF THE HILLS.'

This notice having been read was highly

approved of, and it was agreed that it should be posted on the door of Tom Duffy's house that very night, so that he could not fail to see it in the morning.

'And now,' said Murtagh, 'he has got fair notice, and by the powers if he don't mind it, we'll down *him* first; and if that doesn't do, we'll not scruple to bring down the big man himself after him.'

'Don't ye think it would be well to fire a shot or two in old Snugg's ear, just to give him a bit of a shtart?' said Black Hugh. 'Maybe if we give him a good fright, he might stop both Tom and the young lord from going on with their tricks.'

'Troth then ye'll do no such thing,' replied Murtagh. 'Ould Snugg's a dacent ould man, and never disturbed the poor, and why should we want to disturb him? Besides they say that he and the young lord is not a bit too close with one another, becuse he warned the young lord against goin' on as he is. Lave ould Snugg alone, just to show them the man we like; and we'll take Tom Duffy down, just to show them the man we don't like.'

'Ye are right there,' exclaimed Cormac. 'We should never touch our friends, for it gives

our inimies the crow over them, do ye see. And now, boys, who'll post the notice on Tom Duffy's door?'

'Teague might do that much for us,' said Murtagh. 'Sorra much help he has given us yet any way, and he on his keepin' among us.'

'I tell ye plainly, boys,' said Teague, 'I don't like what ye are at at all. And if I thought this was the work was to be goin' on, I'd sooner give myself up to the polis at once. However, as this is only givin' the poor fellow warnin', I suppose there's no harm in that; so give me the notice, and I'll post it on his door without fail to-night.'

'Well done, Teague,' cried Cormac; 'I knew ye had the right drop of blood in ye. Ye'll come round all right yet, never fear.'

This matter having been settled, the party broke up, and Teague soon after went out with 'a bit of pitch,' which Murtagh gave him, and performed his first Ribbon act by posting a Ribbon notice on the door of the bailiff Tom Duffy.

On the morning after the occurrences above detailed, the youthful Earl of Killarney and Mr. Hardon resolved to make an extended expedition on horseback, with a view of visiting

the actual gap or 'bite' in the Devil's Bit Mountains, and also of inspecting sundry improvements which Mr. Hardon had made upon his estate. They were accompanied by Mr. Sharp, a distinguished lawyer, and by an eminent Queen's Counsel, a friend of Mr. Hardon's, both having just arrived on a visit for a few days.

The day was charming. The leaves had not yet fallen, but the autumn air was fast beginning to turn their colour from the deep green of summer to the rich tint which usually precedes decay. The air was dry, fresh, and warm, without being sultry—just such a day as makes those who love exercise on horseback enjoy a lengthened expedition. Much of the country through which they rode was classic ground to the 'little party, from the strange adventures which had occurred there to their host Mr. Hardon. As they rode down the avenue he pointed out where he had been upset in his gig after being fired at near the gate; and he also pointed out the long narrow window, which he had mistaken for a man, when he had so nearly shot the leaseholder inside. As they rode up the grassy slope which leads to the gap from which the moun-

tain takes its name of 'Devil's Bit,' they came upon the spot where Mr. Hardon's gamekeeper had been murdered some little time before. It had been a terrible event, and had caused a great sensation. He was found on the grass near a plantation, lying in a pool of blood, his head nearly cleft open by a stroke of a hatchet, which was lying close by the body. It was generally believed that many of the people in the immediate neighbourhood knew all about the transaction, but not one could be found to give evidence, and the perpetrator of the deed is to this day unknown to the law.

Mr. Sharp, the active lawyer, took particular interest in this case ; he examined the ground most carefully, and at last he said : ' Well, Mr. Hardon, I think if I had been here at the time, and had had an opportunity of cross-examining some of the neighbouring peasants, I should have been able to get the truth out of them some way or other, notwithstanding all their boasted cunning. The stipendiary magistrates are not very clever in forcing the truth out of a peasant whether he will or not.'

'I don't know,' replied Mr. Hardon. 'It is not so easy as you might suppose. We had a very clever man here at the time, and he utterly

failed to make any hand of them, though we all believed they knew perfectly well who had committed the murder, and that it had been planned some time before.'

'Well,' said Mr. Sharp, with the air of a man who had a tolerably good opinion of his own powers of cross-examination, 'I only wish I had a trial at it. I don't recollect ever *yet* to have failed to get the truth out of a peasant, no matter how he might turn and twist.'

'You may have a trial of it now then, if you will,' said Mr. Hardon, 'for I see a little boy watching us, in the hope that we shall employ him as a guide to the Gap. He is accustomed to do that office for strangers, but he is keeping aloof at present, as I suspect he knows me. But we can call him on pretence of holding our horses, and you can try what you can make of him.'

'But does he actually know anything about the murder?' asked Mr. Sharp.

'I am convinced he knows everything about it,' replied Mr. Hardon. 'It is generally considered he saw it done, as he lives at the foot of the hill, and his family are well known to have sympathies in the Ribbon line. His own brother was suspected of it, but whether justly

or not, I cannot say. At all events, you may set your mind at rest as to the fact of his being perfectly informed as to the whole affair ; and I'll bet you a sovereign you don't get out of him a tenth part of what he knows. Our English friend here will hold the stakes and decide between us.'

'Done!' said the lawyer at once. 'Only leave me alone at him, and let no one speak a word but myself.'

'Done!' said Mr. Hardon. 'And you shall have all the talk to yourself, even to the calling of the boy over here. Remember, our bet is that you don't make the boy tell one-tenth of what he really knows.'

The lawyer was delighted to get such an opportunity of exhibiting his powers of cross-examination before the young English nobleman, so he went at his work with a will.

'Come here, my little fellow,' he said, beckoning to the boy ; 'we want you to hold our horses when we get up to the Devil's Bit. I suppose you can guide us to it?'

'Faix, I can,' said the boy ; and jumping over an adjoining hedge, he was at their side in a moment.

He was a ragged little urchin, apparently

about fifteen or sixteen years of age. He wore a tattered jacket and still more tattered pair of trousers, which reached a little below the knee, leaving his feet and ankles and part of the leg quite bare. He had no hat or cap, and had a remarkable down look when spoken to or speaking himself; now and then raising his head to take a quick glance at the person he was addressing, and as suddenly looking down again.

‘Is it a long way up to the Bit, my little fellow?’ asked the lawyer.

‘Bedad it isn’t,’ said the boy; ‘only about half a mile.’

‘I heard there was a man killed up here not long ago,’ said the lawyer; ‘was it anywhere about here it happened?’

The boy gave a sudden quick glance up into the lawyer’s face as he asked this question, looked at him for a moment steadily, and then cast down his eyes on the ground again.

‘Well, my boy,’ said the lawyer, ‘wasn’t it somewhere near this the man was killed?’

‘Oh, bedad it was,’ said the boy. ‘Sure I’ll show your honour the spot in a minute.’

‘Then you know the exact spot?’ said the lawyer.

THE DEVIL'S BIT.

'Bedad I do,' said the boy.

'How come you to know the exact spot?' asked the lawyer; 'you didn't see the man killed?'

'Bedad I didn't,' said the boy; 'but sure I saw him lying there soon after he was killed.'

'The very same day?' said the lawyer.

'Yis, bedad,' said the boy.

'And was there blood about the place?' asked the lawyer.

'Bedad there was,' said the boy.

'And how was the man lying when you saw him?' asked the lawyer.

'He was lying on his side, just as if he was asleep,' said the boy.

'And did they murder him when he was asleep?' asked the lawyer.

'Oh, bedad sure nobody murdered him,' said the boy, looking up again quickly into the lawyer's face.

'Nobody murdered him!' said the lawyer, 'Why I thought you told me a few minutes ago you could show me the place where he was killed, and that you saw him lying there, and a quantity of blood about the place. Perhaps you think killing is no murder?'

'Oh, bedad I do,' said the boy; 'but sure no one killed him.'

‘What do you mean?’ said the lawyer, beginning to lose his temper. ‘Is the man dead?’

‘Bedad he is,’ said the boy.

‘And buried?’

‘Bedad he is,’ said the boy.

‘And you were at the funeral?’

‘Bedad I was,’ said the boy.

‘Did you see anything lying near him that could have killed him?’

‘Bedad I did,’ said the boy.

‘What was it?’

‘A hatchet,’ said the boy.

‘And was there blood on the hatchet?’

‘Bedad there was,’ said the boy.

At last the lawyer’s eyes began to twinkle, and he gave a knowing wink to his companions before he asked the next question. He stopped for a moment to look sternly at the little urchin, and try and make him raise his head once more to look at him. But in this he utterly failed. The little fellow still kept his head down, looking at the ground, whilst he quietly mashed the mud on the pathway with his bare foot, making sundry ‘figures of eight’ on the plastic clay with his big toe.

‘Tell me, sir!’ he said, at length, in a stern

loud voice. 'How did that man come by his death? Did not somebody *murder* him, sir, or do you want to make me believe that the man committed suicide and killed himself?'

'Bedad I dunna,' said the boy. 'But what *the people all said was, that a weasel sooked him, and the blud runned out upon the hatchet!*'¹

The little boy never stirred, nor looked up, nor changed a muscle of his countenance as he said this, but a burst of laughter from the lawyer's companions showed him they were conscious of his failure.

'You young rascal!' exclaimed the lawyer, raising his whip. But the boy seemed to have eyes at the top of his head; for the moment the whip was raised he leaped three or four paces away, and then bending forward towards the lawyer, and spreading out his fingers from the tip of his nose in the most approved fashion of defiance and contempt, he made an unearthly grin of triumph and malice combined, and bounded down the mountain like a fawn chased by a terrier.

¹ An eminent Queen's Counsel, who was one of the party present, related the above to me as fact. Of course *his companions* were not those described in my tale.—W. S. T.

‘Confound that young rascal!’ said the lawyer, half laughing and half indignant, ‘I never was so baffled in my life. Here is your sovereign, Hardon. I admit you have won it fairly.’

The party now mounted their horses and rode up to the gap at the Devil’s Bit, from which a splendid view may be seen. To the north lies the valley of Roscrea, a portion of the King’s County, and the large barony of Lower Ormond, a bird’s-eye view of almost the whole of which may be obtained. To the south may be seen the rich plains of Eliogarty, Kilnamanagh, and Middlethird, extending even to the Rock of Cashel.

‘What a splendid country!’ exclaimed the young Englishman, in admiration of the view on both sides. ‘Turn which way you will, north or south, all is splendid, all—as Cromwell said—“a land well worth fighting for.”’

‘Aye, and it is fought for till this very day,’ said the lawyer. ‘The man whose murder we were discussing a few minutes ago was one of the victims of the land-war, and the very grin of that urchin showed his triumph over a slaughtered foe!’

‘Our friend has scarcely recovered his equanimity yet,’ observed Mr. Hardon smiling.

The party now turned on their way down the mountain and towards another portion of Mr. Hardon's extensive estate. After riding some miles they were met by a young man running as it were for his life, but who, when he saw them, immediately stopped his headlong speed, and approached them respectfully.

'Gentlemen,' he said as soon as he could recover his breath, 'maybe ye would be kind enough to come in and visit my poor ould mother. She has only a short time to live, and she wants to make her will, and we are none of us able to write it out for her. No doubt, ye are good scholars, and if one of ye would come in and do it now, before the ould woman departs, ye would for ever oblige us. The house is over beyond. And I will go on for the priest, for she wants to see his reverence in a big hurry too.'

'Here is the very man can do it,' said Mr. Hardon. 'Sharp, would you, for once in your life, do a bit of law without a fee?'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Sharp. 'You may go on, my boy, for the priest. I will see and have the will properly drawn out.'

'This is one of my tenants,' said Mr. Hardon.

But I don't think she is going to leave *me* anything.'

'Probably not,' replied the lawyer. 'It would be deuced odd if she did.'

A few minutes' riding brought them to the door. It appeared a comfortable long low-thatched house, and the family inside appeared to be of the class of 'snug farmers.' The widow—for the farm belonged to her—held about fifty acres of ground, and there was no appearance of poverty about the place. A large pig, it is true, with a fine litter of healthy squeaking young ones, marched into the kitchen with an accustomed air, and lay down in the corner where there was a straw bed, as if she had quite as good a right to be there as any of the rest of the family. And so she had—at least if long possession gives any right or title. And the little ones hustled and sucked her as she lay grunting there, as if they also were quite in their proper places. A hen which was roosting on the half door, flew with a loud crow and a flap of her wings into the lawyer's face as he entered, and knocked off his hat, which rather disturbed him for the moment. There were several old women, as is usual on such occasions, in the kitchen, and two or three especial favourites

were in an inner room where lay the dying woman. Her daughter and a younger son sat by her bedside.

The lawyer entered the inner room, accompanied by the young Earl, who said he wished to be present at the scene.

‘Is this the priest?’ asked the dying woman.

‘No, mother,’ replied the girl. ‘It is some strange gentleman come in.’

‘Not Mr. Hardon I hope?’ said the dying woman in alarm.

‘No, my good woman,’ said the lawyer kindly. ‘I met your son a few minutes ago, and he told me he was going for the priest, but that you were anxious to have your will drawn; so as I am a lawyer, I told him I would do it for you if you wished.’

‘You seem an honest gentleman,’ said the dying woman, ‘and I will gladly get you to write it for me. Sure I needn’t sign it till the priest comes, and he can tell me if it is all right.’

The lawyer smiled at this act of caution in the old lady, but having obtained writing materials, he set to work. Having left two hundred pounds to her daughter, and one hundred pounds to her younger son, and the

farm and all the stock on it to her elder son who had gone for the priest, and some other small bequests, the lawyer asked her had she any wish as to where she should be buried.

‘I had nigh forgot it,’ said the dying woman, ‘and am obliged to you for reminding me. I would like to be buried some miles away, at the old graveyard nigh the mail-coach road, in the parish of Killavinoge.’

‘Ah mother dear, why there?’ exclaimed her daughter. ‘Why not in the old churchyard near at hand where all your people were buried before you? Ye’ll have a great funeral entirely there, but if ye go so far off ye’ll have no followin’, for the people won’t be content to go so far from home.’

‘Whisht, honey, machree!’ said the dying mother. ‘The funeral will be big enough; and big or little, I wouldn’t wish to be buried near home.’

‘Ah why not, mother dear?’ asked the daughter.

‘Because, honey, I know Mr. Hardon well, and though my old bones is not worth much, yet if I was anywhere nigh at hand, it wouldn’t be long but what he would surely be grinding me up and putting me out for top-dressing on

the land, and where would I be in the great resurrection then?'¹

'She is quite right,' said the lawyer in a grave decided tone; 'we will bury her in Killavinoe, and in the old graveyard near the mail-coach road; that's the place I think'—he continued, as he wrote it all carefully down, 'and then there will be no fear of her bones being taken by Mr. Hardon or anyone else and put out for turnips or top-dressing, and she will be sure of being all right in her place when the great resurrection comes. And now, my good woman, I hope you will live a long time yet, and that the priest will approve of the will when he sees it.' And bidding her kindly good-bye, and shaking hands with the daughter, he abruptly left the apartment, delighted to have this joke—as he termed it—against his friend Mr. Hardon.

The young Earl was silent as he rode home. He had seen much that day: a splendid country, a most intelligent peasantry, and some strange signs of the land-war still existing. All he had heard at Derreen rushed back upon his mind, and the beautiful Ierne—with her vivid tales of Irish wrongs—was again presented to his imagination.

¹ Fact.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RACE FOR LIFE.

THE Earl of Killarney had no sooner finished breakfast on the morning after his expedition to the Devil's Bit, than he was informed that Tom Duffy was waiting outside to see him. He went out accordingly, and found his bailiff somewhat pale, and evidently nervous and anxious.

‘Well, Tom,’ said the Earl, ‘what is the matter ; you seem to be a little alarmed ?’

‘Bedad ! it’s no wonder, your lordship. Look at that !’ said the bailiff, as he placed the warning notice in the hands of his employer.

The Earl read the document attentively, and then quietly folding it up, he said, ‘Do you consider this notice of much importance, Tom ?’

‘Why not ?’ replied Tom. ‘Sure it’s what I’ve been expecting all along. It’s little less than if the judge pronounced sentence of death against a prisoner.’

‘Then you think they will really attempt to carry it out?’ enquired the Earl.

‘Bedad, they will try, your lordship, as sure as you are standin’ there on your own two legs; barrin’ I run the country, or have nothin’ at all to do with the improvements.’

‘Well, this is too bad,’ returned the Earl indignantly. ‘Here am I prepared to expend almost any amount on the improvement of the people, their houses, and their lands, and the thanks I get is a threat to murder my bailiff who is charged to execute the works. How can we wonder that absenteeism prevails in Ireland!’

‘Bedad, it’s all true, your lordship. But what is to be done now? I am a dead man if I go on, and if I don’t, sure I lose my place, and maybe my farm, for your lordship will then be looking for some one else to serve ye?’

‘No, Tom,’ replied his lordship, ‘you shall do exactly as you like. I am resolved not to yield to this system of intimidation; I will certainly proceed with my plans, and carry out the improvements I have entered on. I am in hopes the people will yet see the earnest desire I have for their benefit; and they certainly will do so unless blinded by some fanatical

Ribbonmen. But I will ask no man to enter upon a post of danger against his own free will. We have the vacant farm to begin on; if you wish to go and live there for a time, until this terrible conspiracy is blown down, I will afford you every protection in my power, and you shall be liberally paid; and of course continue to hold your own land besides. But if you are unwilling to enter upon this matter, you have only to say so, and I will get another steward, and you can remain quietly, and free from danger in your farm. You can come to me to-morrow, and tell me what you will do, but I would not for worlds induce you to enter on a course of danger otherwise than with your own free will.'

'Bedad, my lord, ye spake like a gentleman as ye are, and as for me, I'm a poor man in my way, but I'll never desert ye in a pinch. So come what will, your lordship won't find me to fail any way. Howsomever, my lord, ye will excuse me when I say that these chaps is not jokin', and faix, I'll have to look out, and maybe your lordship after me, that they don't take us both down when we are least thinking of it.'

'This is monstrous!' exclaimed the Earl.
'But I have entered on my plans with a clear

conscience. They may murder me, but they shall not frighten me out of them.'

Lord Killarney had scarcely spoken these words, when the tramp of several policemen was heard coming up the approach, and they soon after emerged from the plantation and drew up opposite the hall-door.

'We have just heard,' said the officer or sub-inspector, coming forward and saluting the Earl, 'that your bailiff has received a threatening notice, and we have come to enquire into the case, as it is my duty to report all outrages of the kind to the authorities in Dublin.'

'It is quite true,' replied the Earl. 'My bailiff, Tom Duffy, is before you, and will show you the notice, as he now has it in his hand. It strikes me, however, that it is something a little different from a mere threatening notice inasmuch as it partakes also of a warning in a sort of half-friendly way. I presume if he desists from the course which is so objectionable to these midnight legislators, he would be perfectly safe.'

The police-officer took the notice and read it more than once, examining the handwriting carefully as he did so.

'You will leave this notice with me, my

friend,' he said, addressing Tom Duffy; 'I am in hopes I may yet be able to discover who it was that wrote this, and above all who it was that had the audacity to post it on your door.'

'Bedad, for that matter, I'd as soon ye would let the boys alone,' observed Tom. 'Sure I take it very kind of them to give a body warnin', and not to take the life of a poor man before he has made his will, or said a word at all to the priest. And maybe the boy that posted it was not the worst of them either. I once knew a boy that got seven years' transportation for postin' a notice on a farmer's door, and troth he was the only raal friend the farmer had in the Ribbon lodge. And sure if the bloody villains are determined to take one's life—and faix it's seldom they post the like of that unless they intend to try—it's better to be prepared anyway, both body and soul, to meet them.'

'I quite agree with Tom Duffy,' said the Earl. 'Hunt down the Ribbon lodge if you can, and every conspirator in it ought to be hanged as the greatest enemy Ireland at present has; but if they *are* determined to murder one, and if you and all your police are unable to stop these atrocities, and to punish the per-

petrators of those audacious murders which have so disgraced our country, I confess I would much prefer getting notice in time so that one might prepare to defend oneself, to being shot from behind a hedge without any notice whatever.'

'The Government take a different view of this matter,' replied the officer. 'However, it is my duty to report the outrage, and I am also authorised to offer any assistance and protection in my power to your bailiff, and of course to your lordship should you require it.'

'I will think over this matter,' returned his lordship; 'and in the meantime I wish you a very good morning.'

The police-officer bowed and retired, and having obtained the notice from Tom Duffy, and arranged his men in military order, and made them dress up and go through several mysterious evolutions, he gave the word 'Quick march!' and off he went along with them.

'Those are fine-looking fellows,' said Mr. Hardon, who had been standing on the hall-door steps listening to the conversation, 'but they are no more detectives than our friend Tom is, probably not half so much. I have had several of them for years about my place to watch

and ward off these Ribbonmen, but I have been allowed to pick my men. The generality of them would be quite useless either to prevent an outrage or detect the perpetrator when it has been committed. But they are first rate in reporting it to the Castle! It is but fair to say, however, that as a body of soldiers it would be hard to find their equal, and as such they are particularly well suited to quash any outbreak or rebellion in Ireland.'

'Bedad, Mr. Hardon, that's all very true, and I am not denyin' it,' said Tom. 'But what good is all that to me if they can't keep me from bein' shot? No doubt it's great fun to those fine chaps to be sendin' elegant reports to the Castle, and the Lord-Liftenant, and all the rest of them up there, but faix it's not pleasant to be the subject of them.'

'Quite true, Tom,' said Mr. Hardon. 'I have known and felt every word of what you say often enough, for you know the Ribbonmen have been a long time trying to get at me.'

'Ah well now,' said Tom, 'it's very different to be as your honour is with a fine big house, and plenty of them polis always wandering about the place day and night, from what it is to a poor man who must attend fair and market,

and who can be shot any day in his own field, and no one know a ha'p'orth about it till he's down.'

'Well, well, Tom, we must hope the best. You are a fine stout fellow, and an honest fellow too, and that's what keeps the heart up. I am glad to hear you are not going to give in, and if I can help you, never fear I will do my best. If I could dash into the middle of them when they were sitting in conclave with all their arms about them, it's what I would like best.'

Tom Duffy, having made up his mind not to quit his service, but to carry out the Earl's plans to the best of his ability, it was resolved to lose no time in entering on the works of improvement. The vacant farm on which this experiment was first to be tried was situated within a few hundred yards of the police barrack; and as it was settled that Tom Duffy should remove from his own house, and take up his quarters in that upon the lands to be improved, it was not thought necessary to grant him any further protection from the police establishment. The police, however, were ordered to keep a sharp look out for any strangers or suspicious persons who might come about the place.

The farm which had been selected for the experiment of the contemplated improvements soon presented a most animated scene. Workmen were to be found in abundance. A skilled agriculturist had been employed, who laid out the works to be performed. The wet land was thoroughly drained and subsoiled; the crooked fences which confined fields of an acre or two each were all thrown down and levelled; and the whole extent of land, comprising about one hundred and fifty acres, was remodelled; new fences were made which threw the fields into regular squares of a convenient size for cultivation; a road was laid out through the centre, commanding each field, and giving easy access from the homestead; and the whole presented a scene of industry and well-regulated improvement such as had not been seen in the country before.

Nor were the houses and homesteads on the farm neglected. A competent clerk of the works had been employed to re-model these, and instead of thatched cabins with bursting and ruined walls of mud, new stone and mortar buildings sprang up as if by magic, well slated and compact, so that in a very short time the whole farm, house, steadings, and land, were a

model of utility and order, instead of being, as before, a striking example of mismanagement, neglect, and misery.

The young Earl of Killarney had watched these improvements with great interest and pleasure. They had now been carried on for nearly two months continuously. Tom Duffy had done his duty well, and no symptom of molestation took place; so that he and the Earl began to hope that the Ribbonmen had changed their minds, and seeing the advantage of the improvements effected, and of the vast amount of money laid out in labour in the country, had become convinced that these things were rather for their interest than otherwise.

But they little knew the Ribbonmen, or the spirit which animated these self-constituted 'friends of Ireland.' Winter had now set in, and the Earl of Killarney still remained in Tipperary. He had become so interested in the management of his estate, and of the works being carried on upon it, that he had continued as a guest in the hospitable mansion of Mr. Hardon. The latter was a bachelor, with large means, and was but too happy to have the company of so agreeable a companion as the

young Earl in the evenings which had become long and dreary. Every morning regularly, the Earl, who had purchased a couple of Irish horses in the neighbourhood—and they were both of them first-rate animals—rode out to the farm, or to some other part of his estate where improvements of a like nature were being carried on, to superintend and inspect the works; and though very ignorant about these matters at first, he soon acquired a practical knowledge of all details necessary for the most intelligent improvement of an Irish property. He was fortunate in his agriculturist and his builder or clerk of the works. Both these men understood their business well, and by watching all their operations with care, the young Earl was not long in acquiring a vast amount of valuable practical knowledge.

But there was not a work he had entered on, nor a step he had taken, which was not watched with catlike vigilance by the Ribbonmen. They had been discomfited and perplexed by the suddenness and vigour with which the young lord had entered upon the works. Not less than from one to two hundred men were daily employed at higher wages than had hitherto been given in the country; and the feeling of

many of the people was decidedly in favour of these extensive and liberal proceedings. The Ribbonmen therefore were compelled to lie by for a time. Many of those who had at first sympathised with them were gradually drawn away by the high rate of wages offered, and were found employed upon the works. Several of the most respectable farmers also came forward, and seeing the success which had attended these operations, requested that they might be permitted to derive advantage from the liberality of their young landlord. And, in short, the whole plan was in course of success beyond his most sanguine expectations.

It was on a dark November evening that Murtagh O'Brien, Cormac O'Carroll, and Black Hugh McShane, with three more of their old associates, and Teague O'Hanlon, who was still on his keeping in the country, met together as of old at Murtagh's house. They had not met 'to consider the state of the country,' as they called it, for a month or more. The fact was, they plainly saw that things were going against them, that present profit had more effect upon the generality of industrious men than the vague hope of recovering the forfeited estates; that idleness and disaffection were at a discount, and

that they were losing their influence amongst the people.

No sooner had the party collected than the door was securely fastened. Shutters were nailed up against the windows to prevent wanderers from looking in; whisky in abundance, with hot water and sugar, was laid upon the table, and a large log of bog-wood was placed upon the fire, which threw warmth and light around the room.

The Ribbonmen sat down to their liquor sadly enough, and each of them took a large tumbler of whisky punch, hot and strong, before a word was spoken. At length Murtagh opened the proceedings.

‘Well, boys, I always told ye how it would be, and that once the young lord got footing in the country he’d never stop till he changed the face of it outright, so that the ancient stock would never know where they were. Look at Ned Hoolahan’s farm now, that he gave up not six months ago because he couldn’t pay the rent—and sure that was no reason for givin’ up the land—look at that farm, I say, and sure Ned Hoolahan himself wouldn’t know it. It’s not the same farm at all; and what chance would he have now of getting back into the ould place

again? We must put a stop to this, boys, or the land will slip through our fingers entirely.'

'Faix then I don't know how ye will stop it,' said Cormac. 'The people is all getting well-pleased with the young lord. They say he is kind and generous, and as open-hearted as there's no doubt he is open-handed. There's plinty of employment and fine wages goin' in the country, and we and the likes of us that don't want to be moiling and toiling all day long, are not so well liked as we wor'. I doubt if it would be safe now to lay a hand on Tom Duffy at all.'

'Safe or not,' exclaimed Black Hugh McShane, 'we can't let them go on as they are. Didn't ould Snugg come to me the other day, as smooth and 'asy that ye'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, and says he, "Hugh," says he, "that little farm of yours is not worth much, it's goin' to the bad," says he, "and Hugh darlin'," says he, "maybe it would be better for you to take a trifle for it, and just go to America, where ye would do far better than here on that bit of barren land," says he. "It's barren enough, Mr. Snugg," says I, "but bedad for all that, I'll never quit it but with my life. I've paid ye your rent, Mr. Snugg," says I, "and why would I

want to give it up?" Ye'd think the poor ould man would sink into the earth when I said this, for I was vexed, so I was. "Oh Hugh dear," says he, "sure I wasn't askin' for the land at all. It's a barren lot, and would be no use to any one. I was only advisin' you for your own good." "I know what's for my good my own self, Mr. Snugg," says I, "and divil a foot ever ye'll get of the land, so ye may make your mind 'asy on that." And with that I walked away and just left him where he was.'

'Served him right,' exclaimed Murtagh. 'I suppose they'll be all turnin' against us now.'

'In troth will they,' replied Hugh, 'unless we show them the stuff we are made of soon.'

Matters now assumed a darker and more desperate attitude with the conspirators. The three leaders, Murtagh, Cormac, and Black Hugh, moved off by themselves to a more remote part of the room, behind some sacks where the light from the bog-wood scarcely penetrated, leaving the remainder of the party to continue their potations. Much whispering, and some violent gesticulations took place, and at last there was a silence, when the slow tearing of paper by some one in the dark part of the kitchen was heard. In a few minutes

Murtagh came forward, with the tops of three small slips of paper in his hand, and went slowly over to the table where the other three men were drinking. His face was pallid, and his eye unsteady, and he did not dare to look any of the men in the face as he approached them. He stood for a few moments at the table, looking at the three slips of paper in his hand. About an inch of each in length projected; the remainder was hidden in his grasp, so that no one could tell which of the three slips was the longest. Twice he was on the point of speaking and then hesitated, and stopped. The three men looked at him in frightened amazement, and steeped as they were in liquor, they seemed well aware that some important step was about to be taken. At length he spoke.

‘Boys,’ said he, ‘it’s all settled. Tom Duffy must die! We gave him fair notice and he didn’t take it. We have our laws, and we are not going to let them be broke, and have the whole country laughin’ at us, and ourselves turned out on the road or to the workhouse. So it’s all settled. Black Hugh will do it, but he must have help, and before I ask ye to draw lots, will any of ye be stout enough to offer to be the man?’

No one spoke, the three men stared at him in frightened horror, knowing that something dreadful had been proposed to them, but waiting further explanations.

‘Well boys,’ resumed Murtagh. ‘Will none of ye spake?—ye could talk loud enough a while ago!’

But no one spoke. They continued still staring at him, as if the whole horror of his proposal had not yet fully dawned upon their minds.

‘I see ye are but a chicken-hearted crew, after all,’ resumed Murtagh. ‘We drew lots among ourselves who would do it, and the lot fell upon Black Hugh; and now we must draw lots as to which of ye will go with him. Our law cannot be broken. So now draw one slip of paper each of ye, and whoever has the longest slip will go with Hugh and help him as he may want it. Corny, do you draw first. It will come all the same in the end.’

Corny looked long at the closed hand which was held out to him, with the three bits of paper projecting from it; and at length, as if much depended on a full examination of each of them he said: ‘My mother told me whenever I drew lots always to take the odd one for

luck; so I'll draw the chap in the middle.' And slowly drawing out the slip of paper as Murtagh loosened his grasp to permit him, he stared at it in terror, and then looked into Murtagh's face.

But Murtagh did not answer his enquiring glance. He kept his eyes fixed on the two remaining slips, and merely said as he approached another of the men: 'It's your turn now, Dan.'

The second man drew, and it appeared as if the paper came out much more quickly than had been the case with Corny. And when he held it up to look at it, his countenance brightened, but he did not speak.

'It's your turn now, Pat,' said Murtagh, as he held his still closed hand to the remaining man. Pat drew, but the paper came out so quickly, that there was no doubt his was the shortest lot.

'Corny has it,' said Murtagh. 'His mother told him right, and the luck is stickin' to him still. The O'Callaghans were always true to Ireland, and Corny won't belie his breed for many a generation past.'

'I wish my ould mother's tongue was split when she told me to choose the odd one for such luck as this!' said Corny doggedly. 'But

it can't be helped now. The lots was fairly drawn, and I had the first choice myself; so come what will, ye'll not find Corny O'Callaghan fail in the good ould cause. Ireland for ever! say I, and may he that wouldn't stand by her when duty calls rot in a coward's grave!'

'I always knew ye were the right sort, Corny,' said Murtagh. 'Come over now to Hugh, and let us settle all about it.'

No sooner had Corny joined Hugh than the latter seized him by the hand and gave it a gripe which would have crunched the bones of most men. But it was answered by Corny, in silence, by a similar friendly squeeze, and both sat down behind the sacks, along with Murtagh and Cormac.

They whispered long and earnestly together, and, at length, it was finally agreed that they should wait a few days till darker nights came on, and then, in the evening, as dusk approached, and when the men on the farm were going home after the work of the day, they should get between Tom Duffy and the house, hide themselves in the laurels which were planted at each side of the dwelling, and as he also came home rush out before he entered the house, and kill him on his own threshold. No

shot was to be fired, lest any alarm should be given to the police ; Black Hugh was to give him the first blow, and Corny was to help to finish him when he was down. Both were then to run for their lives across the country, and the darkness, it was hoped, would prevent the possibility of their being pursued with any chance of success, even if anyone were bold enough to give them chase.

‘And if anyone does come up with us after that,’ said Black Hugh fiercely—as Murtagh had concluded the details of the plan—‘by the powers, I’ll put the contents of this through his body, let the consequences be what they will.’ And so saying he took from his breast-coat-pocket a large horse-pistol, clean and in perfect order, and loaded almost to the muzzle with heavy bits of lead.

The whole party now joined together at the drinking table, but they did not sit long. Pat Hegarty and Dan Molloy were already nearly drunk, having given way to excess when they found they were ‘relieved from duty.’ Corny O’Callaghan refused to taste another drop ; and Black Hugh having swallowed a glass of raw whisky ‘to the success of ould Ireland,’ the party lay down for the night—some on beds,

and some on sacks in the kitchen, to sleep off the effects of the night's potations. Teague O'Hanlon seemed to be asleep in the chimney-corner during the whole of these proceedings.

About the close of November, when the dark nights fit for dark deeds had set in, Tom Duffy was, as usual, superintending the extensive works which were still being carried on upon the vacant farm selected for these experiments. Not less than two hundred men had been employed at the works that day. The harvest had been all gathered in, and as no one who applied for labour was rejected, a vast number of men had crowded in upon the works, which had now been extended to several farms on the estate.

Matters had gone on so quietly since the warning notice had been given, that both the Earl and Tom Duffy had begun to hope that all serious danger had blown over; that the people themselves, seeing the advantage of the money spent in labour in the country, and paid regularly, in cash, every week, would set their faces against anything that could interrupt so prosperous a state of things; and, by degrees, Tom Duffy, who had carried arms at first, began now to lay them aside when near home, only

taking them with him when he went to a distant fair.

The Earl of Killarney steadily refused, at any time, to carry arms of any sort on his estate, though often pressed earnestly by Mr. Hardon to do so.

‘No,’ he would say. ‘If they wish to shoot me for doing my duty uprightly and truly as an Irish landlord ought, let them do so, I am in God’s hands, not theirs, and I will take no man’s life on my estate to save my own.’

Mr. Hardon could not be brought to see matters in that light; and he often warned the Earl that he by no means considered all danger at an end, and that sooner or later an attack would be made on Tom Duffy, if he were not very much upon his guard.

‘Well,’ replied the Earl, as his friend pressed these views upon him one night when he had ridden home unusually late, ‘I have given Tom Duffy every protection he wishes for. He has a first-rate revolver, which, he tells me, he always carries with him when he goes from home; and there is a police-barrack within less than a quarter of a mile of the house, and the police are on the patrol at night. I don’t ask Tom to stand a shot without returning it, as I am prepared to do myself.’

‘Tom would think it very odd if you did,’ replied Mr. Hardon. ‘I don’t suspect he is troubled with any scruples of that kind; I am sure also he will make a good fight if the Ribbonmen give him any fair play, and if he does not leave his pistols behind him, as you say he sometimes does. But fair play is not exactly the quality in which Ribbonmen most excel. However, you and he must only take your chance, as I see I can’t prevail upon either of you to view the matter as seriously as from my long knowledge of the country I cannot help doing myself.’

It was about the end of November, as has been stated, when the dark nights had set in, that Tom Duffy was slowly returning home one evening from his work of superintendence, accompanied by his son, a boy of about ten years old. The day had been fine, brisk, and clear, and a few of the most brilliant of the stars had already begun to show themselves, as Tom reached the gravel outside his own hall door. His little boy was carrying some account-books beside him, in which the names of the men employed had been entered.

Suddenly, in a moment, two men with their faces blackened sprang from their cover amongst

the laurels, and stood between him and the house. Their design flashed at once upon Duffy, and the men and he stared at each other for a moment. One of the men had a large heavy spade in his hand, the other had a heavy black-thorn stick. Tom Duffy was completely unarmed. He had left his revolver in the house, which, to his horror, at that fearful moment, he remembered.

‘Black Hugh!’ he exclaimed suddenly, as he recognised the colour of the man’s hair who stood before him, and in some degree his features, though the latter were discoloured with burnt cork—‘Black Hugh, I know you well. What brings you here to-night? Sure you’re not come to murder a man who never injured you or yours.’

‘You know me!’ returned Hugh. ‘Then we must make the surer work.’ So saying, he raised the spade, and leaping suddenly towards his victim he brought it down with all his force, aiming to split his skull with the long steel blade of the implement. Duffy had only time to spring back a single step, when, raising his arm to guard his head, the weapon struck him with its full force between the elbow and the wrist, breaking the bone with the terrible

violence of the blow. He gave a shrill cry of agony as his arm fell helplessly to his side.

‘I have you now!’ cried the ruffian, as he glanced at his broken arm; and raising his spade again, he aimed another fearful blow at his head. He was more successful this time. Tom Duffy stood paralysed before him. The pain of his broken arm, and the horror of the whole scene coming upon him so suddenly, were too much for his nerves, and though a brave and strong man, he was unable to move a muscle in his defence. He stood looking at his mortal foe.

‘Murderous villain!’ was all he could say—when the spade again descended, and with a surer aim clove his skull into the brain! He fell at once, without uttering a single cry; and lay before his murderer—dead—but his muscles still moving and quivering.

‘Finish him, Corny!’ exclaimed the ruffian. ‘Don’t you see he is not dead yet?’

‘Finish him yourself!’ replied Corny, in horror at the spectacle. ‘I would not touch him now for all the land between this and the Rock of Cashel.’

‘Nothing like sure work!’ exclaimed Black Hugh; and seizing a large building stone which

lay near at hand, he raised it aloft, and threw it down with all his force on the head of the quivering corpse beneath him. 'He will never stir hand or foot of his own free will after that,' said the murderer. 'We must run for our lives now. Come along or they will be down upon us.'

He threw the bloody spade into the laurels, and taking off his shoes that he might run the swifter, he flung them into a cesspool in the back yard as he passed through. Corny and he now started in a race over the open country which lay at the back of the house. There were no woods or plantations to conceal them, but the land was intersected by large fences and high banks enclosing fields of grass. At first they skulked along hedges and behind high banks, but seeing no one give chase, they soon became more bold, and without diminishing their speed they fled across the fields and over the open country towards the mountains.

'No fear of their coming after us,' at length exclaimed Black Hugh, stopping for the first time to take breath. 'No one would dar' chase us but the police, and it will be some time before they hear of it. We must not kill ourselves with runnin'.'

‘You’re a terrible man, Hugh,’ said Corny. ‘I wouldn’t have hit him that second blow with the spade for all the broad lands of Ireland. Oh, God! the look of him, as he stood starin’ in your face with his broken arm beside him. That look will haunt me while I live. It was far worse than smashin’ him with the stone when he was dead.’

‘Ye are but a chicken-hearted lout after all,’ said Black Hugh angrily, but shuddering as the scene was again brought vividly before him. ‘Don’t be talkin’ that way, we will have enough to do to mind ourselves, not to be mindin’ him that’s gone. Let us keep to it; if we were once over the brow of that hill we should be safe, as the darkness will soon be coming on.’

The young Earl of Killarney had on that day ridden his favourite horse Hurricane to a distant part of his estate, and on his return he felt disposed to call in at the vacant farm, and visit the works going on there. As he approached the house he met numbers of the men moving towards home from their labour in the evening, all of whom saluted him with cheerful faces and contented looks as he passed. A few minutes’ ride brought him to

the front of the house, and there—lying upon the gravel immediately opposite the hall door—lay the body of his murdered steward! But when he saw the horror-stricken face of the little boy who had never left the spot, and who could only point with his hand to the cleft and battered skull of his father from which the brain protruded, and when he saw the pool of blood which lay on the gravel beside the body, the whole truth flashed like lightning on his mind. In an instant he leaped from his horse, and placing his hand on the bruised cheek of the murdered man he exclaimed, looking at the boy,

‘He is still quite warm! How many were there?’

‘Two,’ said the boy.

‘What way did they go?’

‘Out that way,’ said the boy, pointing to the back yard of the house.

The Earl leaped upon his horse, and galloping through the yard, and to the top of a small eminence adjoining, he reined in Hurricane, and looked intently all around, but especially towards the mountains. Nor did he look in vain. About a mile from the spot where he stood he saw two men running up a grassy slope

towards the crown of a ridge. He watched them till they reached the top, when they suddenly plunged into the valley at the other side, and disappeared altogether from his view.

‘Those are the men!’ he said. ‘My life on it, those are the men! Now, Hurricane, I will try your mettle. I thought Leicestershire would have tested it, but it seems fated you should give a specimen in your own country first. The fences are large and the stars are beginning to peep,’ he continued, looking up, ‘but there will be fair light for a good fifteen minutes yet—and less than half that will take me there—so here goes.’

The young Earl of Killarney had been a well-known rider to hounds at Oxford; and since he left the university he had kept a first-rate stud at Melton Mowbray. There was nothing in the world he enjoyed so much as a rattling ‘twenty minutes’ with the ‘Quorns;’ and horror-stricken and almost furious as he was at the sickening spectacle he had witnessed, he felt the joyous bounding blood of the fox-hunter rising within him as he gathered up his reins, and cast his look round with the eye of a man accustomed to his work, and to fix upon his own line of country.

The unconscious pressure of his limbs, and change of hand, produced an instantaneous effect upon the spirited animal he rode, which, well accustomed to a gallop with the celebrated Tipperary pack, felt in a moment that his rider was in earnest and bent on real business. Another glance at the country before him—and they were off! not wildly galloping, or rushing madly at the stiff enclosures, but with the steady determined stride of a horse that knows his work, and of a rider who knows how to handle him.

The rider had fixed his eye steadily on the ground where he had seen the two men pass over the hill and disappear; and having marked this spot as he would mark the winning post of a steeple chase, he surrendered himself completely to the excitement of a desperate chase over a well-enclosed and stiff country—the fences of which were new to him, and such as his Leicestershire experience had never taught him to encounter.

But if they were fresh to the Earl they were by no means new to the noble horse he rode; and Hurricane—a powerful and experienced hunter—feeling at once that his master was in earnest, that this was no ‘schooling’ trick, but

that he was bent on real business, put his ears forward, and laid himself to his work as if the hounds were running breast high before him. It was a good mile from the place of starting to the top of the ridge where the men had disappeared, and most of it was rising ground, but neither Hurricane nor his rider flinched; both kept well within themselves, knowing the struggle would be a severe one. Away they went, fence after fence being gallantly cleared, and Hurricane, understanding his business perfectly, never made the slightest mistake. At length a high wall rose to view. This was a fence over which the Earl had never ridden. It was formed of large stones firmly built, and was at least five feet high. It must be confessed that when the Earl saw this formidable fence before him, the thought of turning aside to seek some other line for a moment crossed his thoughts; but fortunately he did not 'change his hand,' nor allow the horse to feel in the least the uncertainty of the rider's mind. No sooner did Hurricane see the wall than his rider felt the change in the sweeping stroke of his gallop. The noble beast perceived at once that an effort must be made. He shortened his stride, gathered himself up—changing his lead-

ing foot more than once in his gallop—and with ears bent forward and head advanced, he showed he had no notion of baulking the formidable leap. His sympathetic rider felt at once that the horse was determined to do his best, so pressing his sides firmly between his legs he put him straight at the lowest spot. The horse never hesitated a moment, but coming up to it exactly right in his stroke—he cleared it at a bound—and lit panting and snorting on the other side.

‘Well done, Hurricane!’ exclaimed the Earl aloud, in an ecstasy, as he patted the now foaming neck of his splendid horse, and again pressed forward in the steady stride of the fox-hunter. ‘Two hundred guineas are nothing for such a rare performer!’

The horse seemed perfectly to understand the praises of his master; his eye glistened, he champed his bit, and arched his neck, and put back his ears to hear him; but he never broke his stride till he reached the summit of the ridge. Here the Earl pulled up. He was on the spot where he had last seen the men of whom he was in chase. It could not have been more than five minutes since he had seen them, as the mile must have been passed over within

that time, at the tremendous pace at which Hurricane had got over the ground. But he could not see anyone. He now scanned the country well. A narrow valley lay before him, at the bottom of which was a brook some sixteen or eighteen feet wide, and beyond the brook a marshy plain; at the far side of the marsh was a small bit of natural wood, abounding in oak and holly.

‘They must have entered that wood,’ he said. ‘It is impossible they could get out of sight so quickly anywhere else, the country is all so open. We have still light for another spurt. Now, Hurricane, if you can only clear the brook as you did the wall, you will be worth your weight in gold!’

So saying he once more gathered up his reins, touched the neck of his steed smartly with his riding-whip just to remind him he was again bent on going, and trotting along the ridge until he found a sound place for jumping, he turned him towards the brook, which was then somewhat swollen with the rains. It was evident the horse by no means liked the leap. He went at it quite differently from what he had done at the five foot wall. His ears were back, and he did not pull steadily at the bridle as he had

done at the former fence. But if the bearing of the horse had put courage into the rider at the wall, the rider felt it his turn now to encourage the horse at the brook, to which his Leicestershire experience had rendered him well accustomed. He knew that Hurricane possessed plenty of power to clear it, but Irish horses don't in general love water, and they require a firm hand to put them over it. Accordingly, for the first time, he struck the noble horse severely with his whip, and then facing the half-maddened animal directly at the brook, he put his head straight, gathered him up, crammed him at it, and forcing him to increase his speed as he approached the bank—over he went like a bird!

The marsh was now before him, and into it he rode more cautiously, hoping to be able to cross it and reach the wood beyond. But before he had got half way through, he found it was impossible. The horse floundered and sank up to his hocks, and he saw it would be out of the question to cross on horseback the deep bog drain which was cut in the centre of the morass. He therefore instantly leaped off his horse, and leaving the struggling beast to make the best of his way back to the firm land, he crossed

the bog drain on foot, and in a minute more plunged into the thickest of the wood. The darkness had now seriously increased, and the shade of the wood, which was a mass of thick holly, and ivy clinging round the stems of the oak, rendered it difficult to see his way. But he resolved to search it thoroughly, as he felt convinced the murderers must be there.

He made one or two casts without success, and then diving into the darkest spot he could find, where the hollies were thickest, and walking round unexpectedly to the far side of a bush of unusual density—he found himself face to face, and within two or three yards of Black Hugh! The murderer was standing in an attitude of defence, with his pistol in his hand, cocked. The Earl stood before him, wholly unarmed, except with a small riding-whip; but each felt in a moment that he had met his mortal foe.

Black Hugh was the first to speak. ‘Stand back!’ he said, ‘stand back I bid you! One man’s blood is enough. Let me alone, and you are safe. If you come one foot nearer, you are a dead man!’ and he raised the pistol as he spoke on a level with the young man’s head.

The Earl was dressed in the ordinary grey

morning dress of a country gentleman ; and his hat was the low round-topped hat—somewhat stiff and hard—as those hats are generally worn. He stood looking at Black Hugh for a moment without speaking or moving, and then suddenly taking off his hat, and dashing it with all his strength in the face of his antagonist, he stooped low, and rushed in upon him, seizing him round the body in his arms. The murderer was so completely taken by surprise at the sudden attack of the Earl, that he fired his pistol as he held it, and the slugs passed harmlessly over the lowered head of Lord Killarney. In a moment a death-struggle ensued. Black Hugh was a giant in strength, but his opponent was both strong and active, and had seized him round the waist, and with all his force was endeavouring to lift him off his legs, and fling him under him on the ground. Hugh saw his danger, and struggled fiercely to avert it. And thus they strove for a minute or more, till each of them had completely lost his breath. But it was indeed a death-struggle ; each knew that his life depended on it. And thus they strove and wrestled, neither being able to throw the other. At length, the murderer recollected the pistol he had fired and dropped, and seeing it

lying on the ground within reach, he loosened for a moment the gripe of his right hand, and stooping suddenly down he seized the pistol, and struck the Earl on his bare head a terrible blow with the heavy end of the weapon. The young man's hands relaxed, his brain reeled, and he fell senseless at the feet of the murderer on the ground.

CHAPTER V.

UNEXPECTED HELP.

WHEN the Earl of Killarney recovered his senses, he found himself still in the little wood where he had encountered the murderer, Black Hugh McShane. Several policemen were around him ; one supported him as he lay or sat upon the grass, and another had washed the wound which had been inflicted by the pistol, and had carefully bound up his head in a handkerchief. But though stunned for the moment by the violence of the blow, the wound did not prove to be serious, and the blood which had flowed freely from it had probably been of service. In half an hour, or less, the Earl was able to rise and walk, and having been supported by the strong and ready arms of two policemen across the bog, he was able, with assistance, to mount Hurricane again ; and the horse being gently led through sundry gaps and gateways, none of which the Earl had

noticed during his headlong race a short time before, he soon reached in safety the barrack where the police were quartered.

Here he learned for the first time what had happened whilst he lay unconscious. The police-barrack, as has been stated, was close to the house near which poor Duffy was murdered. But no shot having been fired, nor other noise made which could attract their attention, the police were wholly ignorant for some time after the event that anything serious had occurred.

The first intimation they had of anything unusual having happened arose from one of their party seeing the young Earl gallop to the top of the small hill at the back of Duffy's house, and then go away at racing speed across the country. The professional sagacity of the policeman told him that something extraordinary must have taken place, and that it would be well, if possible, to keep the Earl in view; accordingly having called to one of his companions to follow, he also went off full speed in the same direction as the horseman. The race was a long one, and when he arrived at the top of the ridge he could see nothing but the foaming riderless steed, who having plunged as best he could out of the morass, was now

standing with loosened rein, frightened and panting, by the side of the brook he had leaped. But there was no sign of his rider; and the policeman guessed that he must be in the wood. Into the wood he dashed at once, and he had not gone far before he came upon the bleeding form of the young Earl, lying unconscious upon the grass. He immediately shouted to his companions, several of whom seeing him start so suddenly on the race, had followed him as closely as they could, and in a very few minutes after he had been struck the Earl received all the attention it was in the power of the policemen to afford.

But next to the duty of securing the safety of the young Earl's life came that of capturing his assailants, and for this purpose two more policemen had scoured the wood, examining every bush, but without success. Night had now nearly closed in, and notwithstanding all their efforts they could find no trace of the murderers. The police were, therefore, forced to conclude that they must have escaped across the bog at the back of the wood, during the brief interval between the struggle with the Earl and their own arrival on the ground. A carriage was immediately sent for to Mr. Hardon's,

and the Earl having made depositions concerning all that had occurred within his own knowledge—namely, having seen the murdered man lying on the ground bleeding and still warm; having seen the two men running, and given them chase on horseback; and finally having had a struggle with a strong man in the wood until he was knocked senseless by a blow of the pistol—returned home to Mr. Hardon's hospitable mansion, accompanied by that gentleman, who had gone to meet him when he heard he had been seriously injured.

The lifeless body of poor Tom Duffy was carried into the house close to which he had been murdered, to await the coroner's inquest. After a full enquiry, and examination both of the boy who had seen the murder committed, and who declared he would know the man who killed his father if he ever saw him again, and also a lengthened examination of Lord Killarney, an open verdict of 'wilful murder against some person or persons unknown,' was duly returned by the jury. The jury at the same time 'desired to record their admiration of the gallant conduct of the Earl of Killarney, and publicly to express their warmest approbation of the manner in which his lordship had acted upon the occasion.'

It was a mournful sight when poor Tom Duffy's remains were taken home to his be-reaved wife and family; but marvellous as it may appear, there was but little sympathy expressed amongst the peasantry at his sad fate; if they felt it, they did not venture to show it. He was buried almost privately—he that would have had a numerous following had he died peaceably in his bed—but few attending the funeral beyond his own family and some of the gentry of the neighbourhood.

The works were now suddenly stopped. Upwards of two hundred men were thrown idle or disemployed, and wages amounting from sixty to seventy pounds per week were lost to the surrounding country.

A short time after the transactions detailed above, and when no clue had been traced to any particular person as the murderer of Tom Duffy, a meeting of the Ribbonmen was again held in the house of Murtagh O'Brien. It was attended by the same men as before, with the exception of Corny O'Callaghan. That young man had not been seen or heard of since the day on which Duffy was murdered.

The meeting of the Ribbonmen on this occasion was somewhat different in tone and

feeling from what had occurred before. None of them would acknowledge it—but still there was an undefined horror on their minds when they found themselves seated in conclave with one who they all knew was the actual slayer of the murdered man. It was true that in some respects he was no worse than they were. Had the lot which had fallen upon him been cast upon any others in his stead, they were equally bound to have done the dreadful deed. But still the horror was there; and as he sat down with them at the table, and stretched out his arm to help himself to the whisky, there was a furtive glance to see if the blood of the victim still stained the hand of the murderer!

Black Hugh could not but feel that this painful sensation existed, though he was unable to fix upon anything which could be considered as an insult on the part of any member of the company. But he plainly saw they were cold and cautious, and shrank from him as if he had the leprosy.

When all were seated at the table, and the whisky had gone round more than once, Black Hugh was the first to speak.

‘Murtagh O’Brien,’ he said, ‘I cannot but feel that you, and still more the others who are

now around me, have different feelin's towards me from what you had before I done your biddin'. I ask all here did I do anything but what my oath bound me to, and what I was ordered by your own selves to do? The lot fell upon me to do it, and I done it; and I ask is it fair now to greet me coldly, as if I had done differently from what ye yourselves had sworn me to on the book? Murtagh O'Brien, I ask you, before all our party, don't I spake fair and reasonable?'

'No doubt of it, Hugh,' exclaimed Murtagh; 'ye have done the work ye were allotted to do well and thoroughly; and not only that, but ye have done it cliverly, so that neither ye, nor one among us, is suspected of it this minute. It is true ye were mighty near killin' the young lord; but sure if ye had itself, no one could blame ye. It was life for life; and sure there is not a man in Ireland who would not fight for his life. Ye done your business like a good man and true, and we welcome you heartily to our meetin' here to-night.'

'Very well, Murtagh,' said Hugh, 'I thank ye for what ye have said. It's time for ye to spake kind to the man who has done your biddin' as I have done yours. But all's not

done yet that should be done. There's more who ought now to be lyin' where Tom Duffy is this minute; and unless we are able and willin' to put them off the walk, I tell you, once for all, there'll be no peace in the country.'

'Arrah! whisht, Hugh,' said one of the men, 'there has been blood enough shed already; is it more blood ye want? I think ye might be satisfied.'

'I am not satisfied, Dan,' replied Black Hugh. 'We have taken down the feet and prevented them walking for a while, but what's the good of that whilever the head remains? I tell ye I have thought over it well, and there is no use in talking; but until we get the young lord himself down there will be no peace in the country.'

'Ye have a quare way of makin' peace,' retorted Dan. 'I never knew what raal war was, or what it was to have a raal uneasy conscience, until poor Tom Duffy was killed, and I never had an 'asy one since. Do ye want to drive us all mad entirely by goin' to kill the young lord?'

'I tell ye he must die,' replied Black Hugh angrily. 'I hear he is about gettin' another bailiff that will be far worse on the people than

Tom, and he'll turn half of us out of the land. What will ye all do then?'

'And who tould ye that?' asked Dan. 'I don't believe a word of it; but I wish to God we had Tom back again for all that.'

'Ye *may* believe it then,' retorted Hugh. 'He is determined on vengeance all the country says; and as to Tom, what's the use of wishing him back again? Ye should have said that when ye drew lots as to which of us would do the job.'

'And that's true, too,' replied Dan; 'we are in for it now, and I suppose we had better go through with it. It's all mighty bad, but we may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.'

'Now ye are beginnin' to talk sense,' replied Black Hugh; 'and it's time we had it all settled. I know something of that same young lord, and a tough one he is to get the better of. I thought he was done for in the wood when I hit him that stroke on the head with the pistol; and, only I was soft that day, having just come away from the corpse of Tom Duffy, I would have finished him before I left. I wonder what's become of Corny. I never seen a sight of him since that night in the wood.'

'Take care he's not going to peach,' observed Murtagh. 'He was soft about it all along.'

. 'I'd roast him alive if I thought so,' exclaimed Hugh, 'let me catch him where I would. But I don't believe it. It's time we were at business.'

The conspirators once more commenced to lay their fearful plans, the final result of which was a resolution that it was necessary for the safety of the people of Ireland that the Earl of Killarney should suffer a similar fate to that of his faithful steward Tom Duffy. It was admitted, however, that he was not likely to prove so easy a victim, and consequently it was determined to shoot him from behind a wall or ditch on his return home some evening from one of his usual rides. It was known that he would attend the Petty Sessions on the following Friday, and that day accordingly was fixed for the deed, as they could calculate pretty nearly the hour of his return.

The place selected for the intended murder was a spot adjoining a small wood, where a low stone wall served as a fence to the road. This wall was about four feet high, and three men were to lie in wait behind it—all armed with guns. It was arranged that Black Hugh should be the centre man, and should fire first. If he succeeded in unhorsing his victim, then all

were to leap into the road, and make matters sure by dashing out his brains with stones ; they were then to run for their lives each to a separate place, and not meet again until that day week, when they were to come together once more at Murtagh's house. If Black Hugh missed his aim, the Earl, of course, must move either backwards or forwards, and whichever way he went, a second shot from one of the other men, so placed as to meet either contingency, would be sure to lay him low. Having arranged all these details, and settled to meet again on Friday morning, the party broke up for the night.

It was on the Sunday evening preceding the intended attack that this terrible plot against the life of the Earl of Killarney was arranged and hatched. Teague O'Hanlon was still 'on his keeping,' a guest in Murtagh's house. He did not, nor was he asked to, join in these conspiracies which affected Tipperary alone. All they required of him was silence, and he sat that night in his usual chimney-corner, apparently asleep, whilst the conspirators were forming their plans. Teague was amazed and horror-stricken at all he saw and heard at Murtagh O'Brien's house ; and more than once he had

resolved to run any risk sooner than remain in such fearful company. He waited, however, thinking it by no means improbable that events would take the very course they had now done, and that having put the steward out of the way, they would attack the master also.

Independent of the sincere regard and attachment which Teague felt towards the young Saxon stranger whom he had known so well in Kerry, he also shrewdly guessed that his young mistress, Ierne, was not wholly indifferent to him; and accordingly he resolved to lie by to watch events carefully, and if any attempt was likely to be made against the life of the Earl, to warn him in some way or other; but come what would, he resolved he would never stand by and see a hair of his head injured.

It was, as has been stated, on the Sunday evening preceding the Friday agreed on for the murder, that Teague heard all these fearful plans arranged. On the following morning he came to Murtagh O'Brien, and told him he thought 'the polis were purty quiet about him now, and that he might go back for a bit to Glenmore, to see how his mother and Peggy were gettin' on; and you know,' he added, 'if there be any occasion, ye'll see me back again amongst ye after a while.'

Murtagh was not sorry to get rid of Teague. He had not found him willing, as he had hoped, to join in the Tipperary conspiracies, and he was glad enough to let him go. So he 'gave him his blessing,' as he said, and Teague started for Derreen early on Monday morning.

Teague had some money with him, which he had kept sewed up in his coat, where no one could possibly suspect it. He had in fact the greater part of the five pounds which the young Saxon had given him on the day he was arrested by the police. This gift Teague had kept to himself, wisely considering that it might turn up to important advantage upon some future occasion. No sooner, therefore, had he left Murtagh's house than he made the best of his way to Thurles, and there, avoiding as much as possible all contact with the police who swarm in unusual numbers in that town (and good reason they have for being there, as all who know the locality can testify), he took a third-class ticket for Killarney, and made his way that very night across the mountains to Kenmare, and from thence he arrived at Derreen on the following morning before the family had come down to breakfast.

On reaching Derreen Teague did not venture

to show himself at his own house, which was close at hand ; he waited quietly in the wood until he saw Ierne come out after breakfast, and seeing she was bent on some expedition to a distance, he followed her towards the sea shore until she was clear of the precincts of the house. He then stepped into the path behind her, and giving a low whistle which he knew she was well accustomed to in former times as a signal for the approach of wild ducks, he stood before Ierne, as she turned suddenly round.

‘Whisht, Miss !’ he said, ‘whisht for the love of God ! I have something to tell ye which won’t bear keepin’ long ; where can I see ye that we’ll be sure of bein’ alone ? I have that to tell ye that will make your hair stand on end.’

Ierne perceived in a moment that Teague was thoroughly in earnest, and startled as she was at the sudden appearance of her now outlawed favourite, an undefined feeling crept over her that one she loved best in the world was in danger.

‘Come with me in my skiff,’ she said ; ‘I was going across the bay to Derryquin this morning. Come with me, and you can tell me what you have to say.’

Teague nodded intelligence, and again disappearing in the wood he allowed Ierne to go alone to the shore. In a few minutes she had pushed her skiff down the shingle to the water, and just as she was prepared to give her light bark the first stroke of the oars, Teague stepped down from behind a holly bush, and placing himself in the stern of the skiff pushed her off at once, and away they glided down the harbour.

‘Oh Miss,’ said Teague, as soon as they were out of hearing of the land, ‘if ever ye were willin’ to risk something to save the life of a friend, now is your only time. As sure as you are alive this minute, himself will be a dead man on Friday night next, unless you can do something to save him.’

‘Who do you mean by “himself”?’ asked Ierne trembling violently. ‘You surely do not mean Mr. Donald?’

‘Not at all, Miss, not at all,’ exclaimed Teague; ‘who should I mean but the young Saxon lord—him they now call the Earl of Killarney?’

Ierne was silent for a few moments, as she allowed her skiff to skim along the surface of the water without an effort. At length in a voice of suppressed agitation she said :

‘Where is he, Teague? Is he down among the people that murdered Tom Duffy the bailiff? I read of that terrible deed, and dreaded that more might come out of it.’

‘Troth then you’re exactly right, Miss,’ replied Teague. ‘He is livin’ there among the worst of them, sure enough; didn’t he give chase to the boys that killed poor Tom, and was nigh takin’ the biggest villain of them all with his own hand, only he got a stroke on the head with the butt-end of a pistol which laid him senseless in the wood. But they are mad with him still for all he done, and they’ll surely kill him on Friday night. You, and none but you, can find any way out of this murdering plot.’

‘Do you know how it is settled to be done?’ asked Ierne anxiously.

‘I do, Miss,’ replied Teague, ‘I know every ha’p’orth about it—the exact spot and all. They are to shoot him in the evening as he comes home from the “Petty Sessions,” as they calls them. There are three of them to be at it, and they’ll do it as surely as you and I is now alive.’

‘I suppose you wouldn’t like to go back and tell the police about it?’ asked Ierne. ‘After all, with such terrible people as these, one really ought not to keep any terms.’

‘Don’t ask me, Miss, for God’s sake don’t ask me,’ entreated Teague in a whisper, as if he dreaded the very fishes of the sea might hear such a dreadful proposition. ‘Come what will I couldn’t do that. I’d sooner shoot every man of them myself, so I would, than bring down the polis upon them. Didn’t the worst of them all keep me in his house when I was in trouble? Aye, and bad as he is, he would have helped me agin’ all the world, if I wanted it. It was when stayin’ with him, on my keepin’, that I larned all I did, and God help me but I larned more than ever I thought to know or ever wished to know. But no matter for that now. I’ll never let it be said that him they kept free when he was in trouble turned informer on them afterwards, and brought down the polis upon them. I’d sooner die myself.’

‘I see, I see,’ said Ierne quickly, ‘it is plain you expect *me* to do something. Have you any plan in your head? If you have tell it me at once.’

‘Sorra plan I have at all, Miss,’ replied Teague. ‘I came off to you the moment I could, to tell you all about it, for faix I never knew ye at a non-plush yet, wherever anything cliver was to be done. I lave all in your own hands, only I

am here to do your biddin' in any way ye plase—barrin' to tell the polis ; and sure I know ye wouldn't do that same yourself either, though ye spoke of it awhile ago.'

After a moment's thought Ierne said : ' Is it the same man that murdered Duffy who is to shoot the young Saxon ? '

' It is, Miss, the very same,' replied Teague. ' There are to be three of them. Him that killed Duffy is to be in the middle, and to fire first ; if he misses, then whichever way the young lord goes, either back or forwards, there will still be a man to take him down. And if the worst comes to the worst, all three are to lep out on him and kill him with pistol, sticks, or stones, or any way they can, as he carries no arms, and will never run away from mortal man.'

Ierne shuddered ; but she appeared to have made up her mind.

' Teague,' she said, ' I will land you near the bridge, at the foot of your own cottage. Away with you to Peggy. Tell her to prepare to come with me to Killarney to-night ; let her get her best clothes on, and make herself tidy as my maid. She has often been with me before in the same capacity. And now mind me, Teague.

This is Tuesday, and we have no time to lose. Do you and she meet me at the boat-house, at seven o'clock this evening, and don't you show yourself in the country at all. If the night's fine, you can row me down to Kenmare in the skiff. Should it turn out wild, we can have the whale-boat. I will bring down one of Mr. Donald's big coats for you, and the men will never find out who you are, and don't you speak a word. They are not in the habit of asking questions when they know I don't choose to have them answered. So now mind what I say. You and Peggy must meet me at seven at the boat-house at Derreen, both of you disguised as well as you can; and Peggy with the things I told you of. Don't speak a word, but when I whistle, come down both of you out of the wood, and take your places silently in the boat.'

'Bedad, Miss Ierne, it's myself will joyfully do your biddin';' exclaimed Teague in great delight. 'Sure I always knew ye were the only one could get the better of it rightly. Not a one of me knows what it is ye are up to this minute, but sure if ye told me to walk barefoot to America, I'd set out upon it this very day, and never ask another question.'

Ierne soon landed Teague where she had said, close to the bridge at the foot of his own cottage; and bringing her skiff round, she made again for the beach at Derreen. She met Kathleen as she entered the house.

‘Well dear! Why, I thought you had gone across to Derryquin,’ exclaimed Kathleen. ‘How came you to change your mind?’

‘The day did not look inviting,’ replied Ierne hurriedly, ‘and I have other reasons besides. Do you know where Donald is?’

‘No,’ returned Kathleen. ‘He went out soon after breakfast, saying it was doubtful whether he could return this evening.’

‘Then I must go alone,’ muttered Ierne to herself, as she passed her sister, and went up to her own room. ‘I dare not tell anyone but Donald, and perhaps it is as well that he should know nothing of it either. Kathleen would think me mad, and would certainly try to prevent me. Donald would not think me much better—so it is all well as it is. Go I will—and save him I will, if I can.’

At the hour of seven precisely Ierne went down to the appointed place at the beach with a small carpet-bag in her hand, and having floated her little skiff, and settled herself as if

bent on a moonlight trip, she whistled low the well-known wild duck signal between her and the faithful Teague. In a moment, as if by magic, two forms emerged from behind the holly bush close by, and silently placed themselves in their several seats in the skiff. Teague pushed her off, and away they glided making straight for the open bay. No sooner had Ierne cleared the immediate vicinity of the land than she beckoned to Teague to take her place at the oars, and reclining at full length in the bottom of the skiff on some cushions and soft skins she had prepared beforehand, she laid her head on Peggy's lap, and directed her to cover her with rugs.

‘Pull for your life, Teague,’ she said. ‘Remember we must get to Killarney in time for the early train in the morning.’ She now directed Peggy to put a handkerchief over her face, and wrapped up in warm rugs she lay perfectly still in the bottom of the little skiff, in the hope of obtaining some sleep before starting across the mountains for Killarney. A brisk row of some four or five hours brought them safely to Kenmare; here Ierne sent Teague to hire a carriage, by which conveyance they reached Killarney very early in the morning. Having obtained a

little rest by lying down on a bed in one of the many excellent hotels in and around that town, the party started by early train, taking their tickets for Thurles, where they arrived that afternoon. This was Wednesday, and Ierne having a whole day before her ere the attack was to take place, resolved to rest that evening as quietly as possible in Thurles. On their arrival at the station they attracted but little attention; two ladies travelling first class—for Ierne had taken Peggy into the same carriage with herself—and a man-servant in attendance to carry their small luggage, were but little noticed. They put up at a small but respectable hotel in the suburbs of the town.

None of the party ventured out at all that day; but on the following morning Teague ordered a car for his mistress; and she and Peggy sitting on one side, and Teague on the other, they started, as it were, to visit a friend in the neighbourhood.

They drove for some distance on the main line of road leading from Thurles to Templemore; and then getting off the car, and directing the carman to wait for them, they turned up a road which led to the base of the mountains. Having walked some three or four miles, Teague

led them stealthily to the very spot where it was arranged that the murderers should lie in wait. Though a country road, yet it was one not much frequented in the neighbourhood. It ran parallel to the base of the mountains, leading to a small village some six or seven miles from the Devil's Bit, and where Petty Sessions were at that time held once a fortnight.

The spot which had been selected was peculiarly adapted to the terrible designs of the murderers. Immediately at the turn of the road lay a small thick wood, composed almost exclusively, as most Irish woods are, of natural holly and oak, and bounded by a wall between three and four feet high along the road. But the wall did not stop at the termination of the wood. It continued some hundred yards further on, parallel to the road. Immediately adjoining the wood was the place selected by the murderers, affording them the option of running across the open country, should such a course be necessary, and yet having the wood close at hand in which they could hide themselves if hard pressed, and where it would be difficult to find them at night.

Ierne examined the place most carefully, noting especially the spot allotted for the centre

man, and having done so, the little party walked rapidly back to the car, and returned unobserved into Thurles.

On the fatal Friday morning—that which the conspirators had resolved should be the last day in the career of the Earl of Killarney—that nobleman was sitting in the breakfast-parlour with his friend Mr. Hardon. ‘The Times’ and one or two Irish papers had been briefly looked over, to see if there was any special news; and finding none, Lord Killarney laid down the paper, and turning to his friend he enquired whether he intended to accompany him to the Petty Sessions that day.

‘I regret very much I cannot do so,’ said Mr. Hardon. ‘I have a previous engagement which requires my presence in an opposite direction. And, to say truth, I am particularly sorry not to be able to accompany you to-day, as I have a sort of undefined presentiment that something is about to happen. But whether it be an attack on you, or on myself, or some calamity not yet developed, I cannot say. I do not often have these presentiments, but when I do, I have almost invariably found that they were based on some reality which my acquaintance with the spiritual world has not,’ I

confess; enabled me quite to understand. We must only hope the best, however, and I beg you will be on your guard, as I certainly intend to be myself.'

'Well, I regret the absence of your company most sincerely,' replied the Earl, 'though I cannot say I lay much stress on any peculiar presentiment which you may feel. The truth is, one ought to have a presentiment every day in Tipperary, if such is required to put one on one's guard. This won't last long, however, as far as I am concerned, as now that I have got another bailiff, and that the works are all going on again, I am thinking of a move from my kind friend and his most hospitable house. I was thinking of naming Monday or Tuesday next as the time of my departure.'

'I shall be sorry with all my heart to lose you,' returned Mr. Hardon. 'Your visit has been the most agreeable to me I have had for many years. I must admit, however, that in some respects you have given Tipperary a full trial, and you certainly have seen something of her ways. Few Englishmen would be willing to brave her dangers as you have done, and I have not the least doubt that if ever you return, you will have peace and quiet after the

ordeal you have now passed through. My only fear is whether the present ordeal has been quite brought to a close.'

'They must be quick about it if they intend to shoot me this season,' replied the Earl. 'This is Friday, and I mean to migrate early next week.'

'Friday is a day of evil omen,' replied his friend. 'I trust it may not be so to-day. At all events, I will take care that the police patrol the road about the time of your return from the Sessions; it is lonely and well suited for an attack.'

'A thousand thanks for your thoughtful care,' replied the Earl. 'I should not have dreamed of such a thing myself, but of course it would be most unreasonable to object. Do as you think best.'

The two friends parted; the one to visit a distant part of his property, and the other to ride to the meeting of magistrates at the Petty Sessions some six or seven miles distant.

CHAPTER VI.

BLACK HUGH AND THE WHITE SPIRIT.

ON the evening of the fatal Friday, as night closed in, three men might have been seen making their way to the little wood which lies at the base of the Kilnarnagh Mountains, stretching between the 'Keeper' and the Devil's Bit. Sometimes they walked singly, and sometimes they joined company, but their movements were stealthy, and though their intention was to avoid notice, yet an acute observer could scarcely fail to be struck by the singularity of their proceedings.

At a considerable distance from these men, two other men followed in their track. These latter appeared still more stealthy in their movements. They kept a full half mile between themselves and those they followed; always so managing, that though they could see the direction in which the first three moved, they avoided being seen by them. One of these

latter two was the young man named Corny O'Callaghan. The other was the head constable of police. The three men first alluded to soon reached and entered the wood, and making their way to a spot where a heap of dry leaves was collected, they removed the leaves, and took out three guns—all in good order and preservation, and wrapped in oilskin to preserve them from the damp of their hiding place. These they carefully loaded, putting in double charges of powder in each, and a handful of roughly cut pieces of lead as slugs. When all was ready, they lay down behind a dyke in the wood, close to the little wall where each had his appointed station.

‘He is later than usual to-night,’ said Black Hugh. ‘He can't have gone by before we came up I suppose? Mind and be quick, and the moment ye hear the sound of a horse's hoofs, each of you run to his post. Stoop low, and ye'll not be seen over the wall.’

‘Bedad it's ugly work,’ said Dan. ‘I hope it's back he'll go and not forward. I'd sooner anyone had the killin' of him than myself.’

‘Did ye see anything passing in the wood just now?’ said Hugh, in a voice slightly altered. ‘I think I saw something white go by a few minutes ago.’

‘Sorra thing,’ replied Dan. ‘It’s thinkin’ of the ghost of Tom Duffy ye are, and by the powers I wouldn’t like he’d come among us to-night.’

‘But I say I *did* see something white go by just now,’ repeated Hugh. ‘It passed away through the wood like a dream, and made no more noise than thought; and where should it go to and stop but at the very spot laid out for myself behind the wall! Lord save us! I hope there’s nothing in it!’

‘It’s a long time since Black Hugh said a prayer,’ observed Dan. ‘I fear we are in for bad luck to-night. It makes my flesh creep to hear him prayin’.’

‘Good luck or bad luck, and let your flesh creep or not, I’ll do my duty,’ said Black Hugh, recovering his audacity; ‘and do you, Dan, and the other, do yours.’

‘Lord save us!’ exclaimed Dan suddenly, his teeth chattering and his knees knocking together with fright, ‘but there’s the white figure in earnest; and may I never, if it isn’t now standin’ in the very spot laid out for me to shoot the young lord when he comes! Lord save us, but maybe it’s Tom Duffy’s ghost!’

‘And if it be the Evil One himself,’ whispered

Hugh ferociously, 'I'll go see, and face him. Give me the gun.'

'For God's sake don't!' exclaimed Dan under his breath. 'If ye fire a shot before the young lord comes up, we are all dead men. It will pass through the Evil One like air, and then he'll turn on us and destroy us body and soul outright.'

But Black Hugh would not be restrained. He took the gun in his hand, and quitting the wood, he walked up within a few paces of where the white figure stood. Darkness was beginning rapidly to set in, and as well as he could see, the figure had again moved to the spot where he was to have taken up his position for shooting the young Earl; its back was to Hugh, and its face to the road, as if watching for the coming horseman. The figure did not move at his approach, though he hemmed rather loudly more than once. At last in a voice trembling with agitation he exclaimed—

'Who are you? Tell me or I will fire, even though you were the Evil One himself!'

As he said these words the figure turned slowly round, and raising its hand in which it held a napkin to its head, it gently pressed a gaping and crimson wound which appeared in

the linen that covered the skull, and which seemed to give the figure the most excruciating pain. It did not move from the spot, but three times successively it raised its hand to its head, and pressed the wound, unfolding the napkin and applying it fresh each time, as if the blood could not be stanchèd.

Black Hugh stood riveted to the spot. He was perfectly paralysed with terror. At length his native ferocity rose within him, and in some degree getting the better of his fear, he exclaimed in a muttered tone, 'Be ye man or divil, ghost, or Tom Duffy himself—speak, or I'll put the contents of this through ye,' and he raised the gun as if to take aim at the figure.

At this moment the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard coming slowly along the road; the figure scarcely moved at his ferocious threat, but stretching out its hand, and pointing to the quarter from which the sounds proceeded, it said, in a voice such as Hugh had never heard before, 'One victim is enough! another, and you are lost!'

It then passed through the wall as if by magic, and disappeared altogether at the other side!

'Whatever ye are,' muttered Hugh, grinding

his teeth between rage and terror, 'I can't stand on the spot where a spirit has just stood before me. Come away, boys,' he continued, addressing his terror-stricken accomplices. 'Ye all saw it as well as me. I couldn't fire a shot to-night from behind that wall if the greatest enemy I ever had was before me. The young lord is safe for this time. I hear his horse go by. Let him go. Tom Duffy, or the Evil One, has given him his life this night. Let us come back to the wood, and when all is quiet we can hide the guns again, and make our way home in the dark.'

Crestfallen, terror-stricken, and shaking in every limb, the three assassins returned to the place where the guns had been concealed, and hiding them once more wrapped in oil-skin in the leaves, they lay down to await an opportunity to return to their several homes.

Meantime the young Earl of Killarney was riding quietly on his favourite horse from the Petty Sessions, where he had been detained longer than usual, several agrarian outrages of a minor class having been brought before the magistrates. He was riding carelessly with the reins on his horse's neck, when, suddenly, Hurricane came to a dead stop, and snorting

violently, and trembling in every limb, he refused to move another step. The Earl at first could see nothing to account for this strange conduct of the horse; but looking more keenly he saw, evidently, a white figure gliding rapidly through the field at the opposite side of the road from where the thick wood lay, and making for a plantation a few hundred yards distant. His first impulse was to jump off his horse and pursue the receding figure, but a moment's reflection led him to think that such a course would be worse than useless. His horse would probably make away towards home, and thus he would have to walk the remainder of the road at night; and even if he succeeded in catching the figure, which was very doubtful, he might only place himself in some ridiculous position. So wondering much at what had happened, he again urged on his startled horse towards home. He had not gone far when he was met by the head constable of police, who, saluting him, asked him had he seen anything unusual on the road or in the fields.

‘Something unusual has certainly happened,’ replied the Earl. ‘A few minutes ago my horse started violently as if he saw something

on the road before him and utterly refused to go forward. I could see nothing then, but on looking into the field on the right-hand side of the road, I saw a white figure moving rapidly away. It moved from the direction of the road, and I think must have crossed it, though I did not see it. I do not think anything moving only in the fields could have terrified my horse so much.'

'Very strange!' observed the policeman thoughtfully; 'I also saw, or thought I saw, something white glide rapidly across the road, and pass away over the open fields. I would have given chase, but I had more important game on foot.'

'I know not to what you allude,' replied the Earl. 'Satan himself appears to be on foot to-night. I suppose we are not far from Borris-o-leigh!'

'Borris-o-leigh does not bear a good name, no doubt,' replied the constable, 'but there are places in Tipperary quite as bad as it. Did your lordship happen to see any men passing this way within the last ten minutes or lying anywhere about?'

'None whatever,' replied the Earl. 'I have not seen a soul—except my friend the ghost—for the last three miles of the way.'

‘Very strange!’ observed the constable. ‘I had better state at once that I got information from a repentant young Ribbonman, who has himself been concerned in some ugly transactions, that your lordship was to be fired at to-night, in the immediate neighbourhood of this wood. I ordered out a large force accordingly, and have them posted secretly all round the wood; whilst I myself—led by my repentant sinner—dogged the would-be assassins about an hour ago into this very wood. Here they must be still, as it is impossible they could have left it without some of my men seeing them. I am convinced they did not observe us dogging them, so why they did not fire at your lordship, as beyond all doubt they had intended, I cannot for the life of me tell.’

‘A very strange story indeed!’ observed the Earl, ‘and that in more respects than one. You had full information, it seems, that I was to be fired at to-night; you dogged the assassins into the very spot from whence they were to commit the crime; you had all your arrangements made for arresting them when the crime was committed; and you never gave the slightest hint to me of the serious danger in which you knew I was placed.’

‘Quite true, my lord,’ said the constable. ‘But then what a thing it would have been in the country to have caught the rascals red-handed in the very act of firing at the Earl of Killarney! In we dash upon the ruffians, and take them in the very act of attempting to commit a murder. They would all be hanged as sure as fate. Whereas had we taken them before they had in any way committed themselves, they would have sworn us black in the face that they were only lying in wait for wild ducks! “flight-shooting,” as they call it; and they would have produced twenty men to swear that this very spot was the only best pass in the country for wild ducks going out to feed at night. I hope, therefore, your lordship will see that it was absolutely necessary to let them commit themselves in some way, or the whole plan would have proved an utter failure.’

‘Well, certainly,’ observed the Earl, ‘this is a somewhat new mode of being expected to die for one’s country. There are dangers enough, as I know to my cost, to be encountered in Ireland and especially in Tipperary. But being exposed as a cock-shot in order to enable the police more effectually to suppress crime, is a danger, I confess, I had not exactly calculated on.’

‘Well, you see, my lord, we can’t quite help it now and then,’ said the constable hesitating. ‘Just conceive what a thing it would have been if we had actually caught the fellows after they had fired, and probably missed your lordship, or perhaps only put a slug or two into the horse. “Detected crime,” my lord, and “convicted crime,” are everything to a policeman, and form grand columns in the police reports. But the truth is, my lord, I don’t recollect any column for “prevented crime.” That very often goes for nothing, or one only gets a backslap in the face from the authorities as if there had been no real danger. Depend on it, my lord, there is nothing like letting one of those rascals commit himself, arresting him red-handed in the very act, calling a special commission, if possible, and hanging him up before he knows where he is!’

‘I shall take care,’ replied the Earl, ‘that you get the fullest credit for the whole of this capitally planned affair. But you said the men must still be in the wood. Don’t you think we had better look after them, and though you have not been so fortunate as to catch them “red-handed,” as you call it—which I confess I am not at all sorry for—yet you might still gain

some credit by arresting armed men in a wood at night.'

'Quite true, my lord; I assure you I have not forgotten them. But the fact is I have been waiting a little to see if the rascals would break cover of themselves, when your lordship would see as pretty a chase by my men as report says you made yourself on horseback the other day. As they don't seem inclined to break cover, however, I suppose we must only beat for them ourselves, and try and spring them; but it is a deal more dangerous work than might be supposed. If we come upon them in the cover, they will be fresh, and probably determined to fight, and one or two of us may be shot, which, after all, as your lordship knows pretty well by this time, is no joke. But if we catch them after a run, they are always more or less exhausted, and they are easily then made amenable.'

'*Nothing like catching the rascals red-handed,* you know,' observed the Earl smiling. 'No one would thank you for catching them running. It would be a "mere prevention of crime;" no column for that, you know, in any of the police reports. We had better get at them straight.'

'Well, well, your lordship has me there, no

doubt,' replied the constable, laughing good-humouredly. 'But credit or no credit, we can't leave the rascals here all night. They are certainly in the wood, and we must either make them break cover, or catch them as best we can.'

The policeman now commenced his operations with extreme vigilance and caution. He sent his scouts to direct all the outlying police to close in gradually upon the wood, investing it as a beleaguered fortress; and, promising twenty pounds in hand to the man who would arrest Black Hugh, and ten pounds for the arrest of each of his companions, he placed them two and two, with directions to beat the wood slowly, but thoroughly, till they all met in the centre.

'That scoundrel Black Hugh,' observed the constable, 'thinks that we don't suspect him. But we know all about him well; a more determined ruffian don't exist in all Tipperary—and that's saying a big word.'

'I wonder could that be the man who gave me the knock on the head with his pistol,' said the Earl. 'I think I should know him again if I saw him.'

'I have good reason to believe it was,' replied

the policeman ; ' we have a long score against him, but it would be a pity to touch him until it's all wound up.'

' He is likely to "commit himself," as you call it, to-night,' said the Earl ' If he is the man I mean, he won't let himself be taken without a fight for it.'

' We shall know all soon,' said the policeman anxiously, as the time for immediate action drew on. ' Will your lordship accompany us or not? There is no reason you should, my lord, unless you fancy to enter on this game yourself; and I must tell you plainly I think it will be a dangerous one before it is played out.'

' Certainly I will accompany you,' replied the Earl; and, tying Hurricane to a tree on the outer extremity of the wood, he joined the constable and his companion in the beat.

Black Hugh and his two companions were lying quietly under the bank of an old dyke, nearly in the middle of the little wood. They discussed in suppressed whispers the events of the night, and especially the appearance of the white figure, which had so strangely preserved the young Earl of Killarney from the murderous attack which had been intended.

' It's mighty strange,' said Hugh. ' I often

hear tell of ghosts and spirits appearin', but faix I never seen one before myself, let alone all of ye seein' it as well as me. Ghosts, they say, are only seen by the one they come to haunt, but bedad this ghost made no sacret of it. By the powers, I'm beginnin' to think it was no ghost at all !'

'Ah, then, what was it, Hugh?' returned Dan. 'For if ever I seen a ghost with my own two eyes before—which in troth I never did—that was a ghost as sure as my name's Dan.'

'Whisht!' exclaimed Black Hugh; 'whisht! I hear the sound of men walkin' on the dead leaves in the wood.'

In a moment they all leaped from their lair, and listened attentively, scarcely drawing their breath.

'As sure as I'm alive the polis is upon us,' said Hugh in a suppressed whisper to his companions. 'I hear them comin' on from two or three different points. I fear we are done for now. We had better have faced the ghost itself than the Peelers; for as sure as I'm born they're comin'. Dan, will ye stand to me this night? or are ye too much afeared? If ye are, say so, and away wid ye up a tree or

anywhere you please. But if ye are for fightin' stay with me, for I've long sworn I would never be taken alive.'

'I'll stand by ye, Hugh, never fear me for that,' replied Dan. 'I wish we had a better cause, no doubt; but as ye are on for fightin', ye will never find me fail ye at a pinch.'

'Hand us the guns, then,' said Hugh; 'what better cause would ye have than fightin' for ould Ireland?'

'Bedad, I'm afeared it's only a rotten branch of the ould stem, as Father James said the other day in the chapel,' replied Dan. 'And maybe the fruit will be sour. But sour or sweet, I'll stand to ye, and as sure as I'm alive I'll blow the head off the first Peeler that lays a hand on me.'

'What will *you* do?' asked Hugh in a whisper, addressing the third man of the party.

'I think I will get up into a tree hard by,' he replied; 'I could see the fightin' better from that.'

'Do so,' replied Black Hugh contemptuously. 'We shall be well rid of you.' And again Black Hugh and Dan crouched down under the dyke.

By this time the steps of the police could be

distinctly heard in various parts of the wood, as they trod on the crisp dead leaves, or brushed through the holly brakes. Hugh carefully examined his piece. It was a single barrel, loaded, as has been said, with slugs. He then took his pistol from his pocket, also carefully charged, and having placed the butt-end so as to come readily to his hand, he crouched down like a tiger in his lair, waiting for the approach of the hunter. Dan crouched down facing the other way, so that neither of them might be taken by surprise.

They had not to wait long. Leaping suddenly to the top of the high bank in the wood under which Hugh had placed himself, the chief constable of police at once saw his man. In a moment Black Hugh sprang up from his stooping posture, and presenting his gun within a few yards of the body of the constable, he said,

‘There is no use in givin’ warnin’ to the likes of you—*take that!*’

He fired. The constable at the moment had his arm raised with his revolver in his hand. He also fired. Both shots took effect. Black Hugh lodged the whole contents of his gun in the left shoulder of the unfortunate

constable; the ball of the constable's pistol passed right through the murderer's lungs.

The constable reeled at the tremendous shock sustained by so close a discharge of the contents of Hugh's gun into his body, and fell fainting into the arms of the young policeman who accompanied him. Black Hugh did not fall. He felt that he had received his death-wound; but he only ground his teeth in rage, and looked round for another victim. Whilst his eye thus wandered savagely it fell upon the young Earl of Killarney, and once more the Saxon lord stood face to face with Black Hugh.

Black Hugh stared at him with amazement, and real horror in his countenance.

'Stand back!' he said, as he drew his pistol from his breast. 'I told you once before to stand back and ye refused. Ye got the worst of it then. Stand back, I say—ye haunt me like a ghost! A spirit saved your life already once to-night, and I swore a bloody oath to myself, as it stood in the spot I had laid out to kill you, that ye must die by some other hand than mine. I kept this very pistol by me to blow your brains out upon the road if the gun failed to finish ye. I will keep my oath, as I ever done, whether good or evil.'

Thus saying, he flung the pistol, cocked and loaded as it was, as far as he could throw it from him. The effort was more than he could sustain, and he sank half-fainting, and with blood foaming on his lips, to the ground. Dan was so horror-stricken at the death-wounds of the policeman and Black Hugh, that he was easily made a prisoner by two other constables who ran to the spot on hearing the shots.

It was indeed a fatal Friday, and unlucky as poor Dan had foretold—but from a different cause than that he thought had occasioned the ill luck. The constable never rallied. He was lifted gently by his comrades, and being placed on a litter constructed of branches of trees with some policemen's coats thrown over it, he was carried home on their shoulders with all the care of which his sad condition admitted. But he had received his death-wound. He died that night, death being principally caused by the terrible shock his system had received from the shot.

The young Earl had tended the wounded policeman with all the care in his power, and having seen him safely on his way home to the barracks, and having sent off another policeman on Hurricane for the doctor, he returned to what

he now felt must be the death-scene of the murderer, Black Hugh.

He found him lying on his back in the wood, with some four or five policemen standing round him. His head was supported by a rolled-up constable's cloak, which had been placed under it as a pillow. His huge form seemed convulsed by the efforts which he made to breathe, whilst the blood and foam trickled from his mouth upon his chest. His eyes were chiefly closed, but every now and then he opened them for a moment, and appeared to look round anxiously, as if there was some one he wished to see.

‘He is dying,’ said one of the policemen, ‘and he wants the priest. Run, one of ye, and see if ye can find him before his poor soul departs.’

But the dying man clenched his hands and ground his teeth, and muttered, as well as his half-choked voice would admit—

‘No—no—not him—another.’

Just then he opened his eyes; and he saw the young Earl standing over him with a sorrowful countenance and deep pity in his eye.

The dying man's face lit up for a moment, and motioning the Earl to bend towards him, he said—

‘It is *you* I want. Send them all away.’

Lord Killarney turned to the policemen and requested them to move a little apart. ‘It is evident,’ he said, ‘that the dying man wishes to speak to me alone, and perhaps he might have something of importance to communicate which he will not tell to others.’

The policemen retired a little way out of hearing; but it was plain they did not trust Black Hugh, wounded and dying as he was. They looked on him as on a dying tiger, who might at any time spring on his adversary in his death-throe.

‘Come near me,’ he said; ‘I am unable to speak loud—and my time—is—very short.’ The young Earl bent low, and placed his ear almost to his mouth.

‘I did my best to kill you,’ he said, ‘not because I hated you—for you never injured me—but because I thought you were an enemy to Ireland. I had bound myself under a bloody oath never to take rest—day or night—until I had rooted out the enemies of Ireland, the hated Saxon race, from the grand—old—ancient soil—of Tipperary. And God knows—with that bloody oath upon me—I never *did* rest, night or day—nor have I ever known one hour’s

peace—for the last ten or fifteen years. Things look something different to me now—and though I still believe that ye, and such as ye—and the next world will tell who's right—are the curse of the ancient soil—yet—I believe ye mean well, that is as well as conquerors can mean—towards the conquered. But that's not what I wanted to tell ye—what I want to tell ye is, that *there is others ready to take my place*, and, if need be, to die for ould Ireland, whether it be in prison, in the field, or on the gallows, sooner than see her land remain for ever with the stranger. Mark my words, young man—more men will be killed in Tipperary yet, before the land question of Ireland is closed. And now mind yourself. Don't think I am goin' to peach. Mortal man shall never go to the gallows through me. I'll die hard—ould Ireland for ever!—hurrah!' And this most strange specimen of the wild animal man, the untamed, untutored, misled Irish Ribbonman, heaved a convulsive sob—and died.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WAKE.

ON the morning after the occurrence related in the last chapter, Lord Killarney sent for his agent, Mr. Snugg, and told him he was then about to leave Tipperary, and that he wanted to make some financial and other arrangements before his departure for the season.

‘You may depend on it, however,’ continued the Earl, ‘that if I live I shall return next year, and carry on with more vigour than ever those works of improvement which I have begun.’

‘Bedad your lordship is a mighty stout man, no doubt,’ replied Mr. Snugg, ‘to think of carrying on still after all that has happened. Didn’t I tell your lordship exactly how it would be? Sure I knew well enough every ha’p’orth that would happen. I told your lordship that your plans would disturb the whole side of the country, and set the minds of the people astray. And sure isn’t poor Tom Duffy killed outright,

and your lordship all as one as killed too? May God presarve us all !'

'I trust He will preserve us, Mr. Snugg, and all those who endeavour to do their duty in Ireland by an earnest endeavour to improve both the moral and physical condition of the people. You think it was I who stirred up the country, and who am more or less responsible for all that has taken place recently on my estate. I think, with great respect, that those are mainly responsible who have for so long allowed all this slough and mud to accumulate ; who by long neglect have let the people remain in a state which is a disgrace to any civilised community ; and who, however palatable they know it to be to their natural laziness, have never made a single effort to raise them from this demoralising ignorance and sluggishness. I consider that those, and those only, who have ministered by their apathy to this degrading state of things, are answerable for the violence which has arisen, and for the murder which has stained our soil.'

This was somewhat a new view to Mr. Snugg, who thought he had put his lordship into a corner, so he held his breath and was silent.

His lordship after a pause again continued :

‘It is not my intention, Mr. Snugg, to continue you as permanent agent over my estate. I see that everything I am anxious to do is contrary to your pre-conceived opinions ; and under these circumstances, where it is plain that employer and employed differ *toto cælo*, as I regret to say we do, in our ideas of the management of my property, I fear it would be impossible that the designs which I am resolved to carry into effect could be brought into operation by you in a manner likely to insure their success. I shall have every care taken that you are placed in a comfortable position, with the large farm which you hold under me at a moderate rent and with a good long lease. But I think you must yourself see that a change of agent is indispensable.’

‘Bedad I don’t deny it, my lord,’ said Mr. Snugg, ‘especially if ye are thinkin’ of carrying on still in the way your lordship has begun. I don’t deny it, my lord ; I would sooner resign of my own accord than set about to carry such plans as them into operation. What is the good of a man’s farm to him, let him have it ever so cheap, and a long lease to boot, if he is sure and sartain to be a corpse before he has time to enjoy it? So I wish your lordship

every good luck in life ; and I will be ready to give up the accounts whenever your lordship pleases.'

'And I will take care, Mr. Snugg,' returned his lordship, 'that you are well and handsomely provided for ; and the more so for the offhand and candid manner in which you have acted on this somewhat disagreeable occasion. Of course you will hold office until your successor is appointed.'

'As long as you like, my lord,' replied Mr. Snugg, 'provided you don't ask me to look after the "improvements," as your lordship calls them ; but bedad I would sooner call them "*alterations*."'

Lord Killarney accordingly made the necessary preparations for his departure, and he resolved that a very few days should find him once more on his way to the valley of Derreen.

But a far different scene from that now described was passing at the cabin of Black Hugh on the evening after his death.

An inquest had been held early in the morning upon the bodies of the constable and Black Hugh. Both bodies had been taken to the police barrack. Lord Killarney's evidence was of course the most important which could be

given; he had been present—standing close by—when both shots were fired; and the jury, after some deliberation, gave a verdict of ‘wilful murder against Black Hugh MacShane, now deceased,’ in the case of the death of the policeman; and of ‘justifiable homicide,’ in favour of the constable who had caused the death of Black Hugh. Under these circumstances immediate application was made for the body of Black Hugh to be given to his friends. The coroner granted the application, and the body of Black Hugh MacShane was carried away in triumph, to be waked in all solemnity that night.

This wake, it was agreed, should be no common wake. Messengers were sent off for miles round to call the people together. Large subscriptions were entered into to purchase whisky, bread, and even meat for the entertainment of the people. Candles innumerable were procured, and a wake, the like of which was never seen before, was proposed to be held over the corpse of him who had not only been killed by the common enemy, the police, but who had himself killed a member of the hated Peeler force.

Besides all this, Black Hugh MacShane was

well known to all within twenty miles of the Devil's Bit as the leader of the Ribbonmen in that quarter of Tipperary and the avenger of 'the rights of Ireland;' and there was not a Ribbon lodge in the district that did not feel bound to send a contingent to his wake.

On the evening of that eventful day, the cabin and grounds surrounding Black Hugh's residence presented a most strange appearance. The cabin was lit up inside by numerous candles, so as to have the appearance of brilliant illuminations. Outside the door several candles had been stuck to the door-posts and lintel, whilst within there was scarcely a spot in the room which could hold a candle where one had not been placed. In the inner room adjoining the kitchen lay the corpse of Hugh MacShane. Candles were stuck all round the bed, so as to give the face of the corpse, which was exposed to public view, the most ghastly and unearthly appearance. Numerous women sat near the corpse, and in every corner of the room, some on chairs, some on stools, and some on larch poles which had been ranged along the walls for the purpose. Sometimes they spoke in whispers, and sometimes, on a special signal being given by one who seemed to understand

the duty well, a loud wail or '*Irish keen*' was heard gradually to rise, prolonged and dwelt on till it reached a height almost terrific, and then gradually subsiding again by slow degrees and in broken sobs, but still with a strange wild musical note pervading the whole, until absolute silence was again restored. These intervals between the periods of impassioned '*keening*' appeared to be the time for refreshments amongst the women, as many of them were seen then to slip quietly away into the kitchen to take a '*drop of comfort*,' with which the men were freely regaling themselves.

The men in the kitchen did not '*keen*' or cry. They looked angry and dark; spoke in muttered whispers to each other, and drank deeply of the strong potations set before them.

Outside the house the scene was equally strange. Upwards of fifty carts or small country cars had come to the wake, each carrying their load of mourners, if such they could indeed be called. The horses had been all unharnessed from their carts, and some strayed loosely about, whilst others were tied to the carts they had drawn. The night was cold, clear, and calm, and in almost every cart was stuck a candle, which lit up the scene, flicker-

ing wildly in the open air. Many of the drivers—servant boys of the farmers—were asleep in their carts, having been well plied with whisky ‘to keep out the cold,’ there being no room for them in the house. Every out-house and every barn was made available; rude tables were formed for the occasion, and still ruder seats were occupied by numerous visitors who were unable to get accommodation in the dwelling-house. In all these places, however, there seemed to be abundance of two things—candles and whisky. Whatever else might be scarce, there was always plenty of these.

In the midst of this strange and ghastly revel, which had now lasted for several hours, once more that night the wild ‘Irish keen’—half music, half wail—was heard gradually to rise. It commenced in the inner room where the women sat around the corpse, and the windows being wide open, there was no obstruction to the sound. Louder and louder it rose, till even the half-drunken servant boys asleep on the cars were roused; and then it was taken up by the women outside, and by those who were drinking in the stables and the barn, until it rose to such a height that it must have been heard for miles from the place. Gradually

again it subsided; and at last sank down into a sort of melancholy croning cry such as old women use when they rock a baby to sleep. At length it ceased altogether, and there was a hushed silence, and people spoke in whispers, as if something unusual was about to happen.

‘She is going to curse his enemies,’ whispered one of the women to a man near her. ‘I heard tell it was to be done to-night.’

As she spoke a tall dark woman, who appeared to be about sixty years of age, though a gray hair could scarcely be detected in the long black locks which hung loosely over her shoulders, rose from her seat in the inside room, and walking firmly from the room where the corpse lay, through the men in the kitchen, who all rose and made way for her, she went outside the house, and kneeling down opposite the window of the brilliantly lit room, so that the light fell full upon her pale and haggard face, she raised her hands as if in supplication; then crossed her thin uncovered arms upon her breast, cast down her eyes, and remained as if in silent agony.

‘It’s Black Hugh’s mother!’ whispered Murtagh O’Brien to his neighbour. ‘It’s old Bridget MacShane. I heard she was to curse the Peelers

to-night. Whisht! Let us hear what she has to say. It's few can curse like her.'

She continued to kneel opposite the window; the ghastly light full upon her worn features. Her lips at length began rapidly to move, though at first no sound could be heard; but by degrees indistinct words, chiefly in the Irish language, found vent, till all could plainly hear a rapid utterance in the language she had learnt as a child, and the use of which she had retained throughout her married life. Suddenly she ceased, as if recollecting herself, and throwing back her dark locks from her face over her shoulders, she said—

'I forgot! I was dreaming of my girlhood. I thought they all knew the language of my youth, the tongue I loved so well. But the language is gone with the land—gone—all gone—and nothing now remains but to curse those that took them all away. Black Hugh was the last human being I loved on this side the grave. I see his corpse inside. He is looking at me now; aye, and I see a smile on his lips this minute!'

A shudder seemed to pass over the frames of the women who sat or stood inside the room

around the corpse, but they did not dare to look at it or move. Old Bridget continued—

‘To me Black Hugh was beautiful as the sun. I taught him to love Ireland, and he loved her. I taught him to hate her enemies—the cursed spawn of the cursed Cromwell, who have fed and fattened on the beautiful valleys of our own native land—and he hated them as I did myself; aye, with a perfect hatred. I never heard the sound of his footstep without pleasure, nor the music of his voice without joy; and now he lies a corpse—shot dead by a bloody Peeler! Who shall I curse for this?’

She ceased, and looked wildly round her.

‘*Who shall I curse for this?*’ she said again.

‘Who, but the young Saxon lord!’ exclaimed a deep voice from the inside of the kitchen where the men were assembled drinking. ‘Curse him!’

‘No!’ exclaimed Bridget fiercely. ‘I will *not* curse him. He may be to blame; but I will never curse one whom Black Hugh blessed! I have it from a sure hand that when he who is now a corpse was still breathing out his last breath, he called the young Saxon to him. He was content to see none but him. They wanted to bring the priest—but he wouldn’t see the

priest; he called the young man to him, and he whispered to him—and to him alone—all he had to say. And them that saw it knows that a tear fell from the young man's eye, and wet the cheek of Hugh! What came over him—how it came about—I cannot tell; but his last words were soft words, whispered into the young man's ear. Why should I curse him whom dying Hugh could not curse; why blast the life of him who was blessed by the last breath of my son!

A strange murmur of surprise and dissatisfaction ran through the assembled crowd. Bridget felt it in a moment, and answered it as quickly.

'Silence!' she said. 'Silence, I say! How dar' one of ye judge a mother's love, or interfere with a mother's hate? I *won't* curse the young Saxon lord; and the first of ye that tells me to do so it's *him* I'll curse instead, and let me see how he will stand it then! But I'll tell ye who I *will* curse. I'll curse the bloody Peelers, who deprive us all of our rights. Isn't the gallant county Tipperary, our own grand county, brim full up with them?¹ Isn't it

¹ It was stated on good authority that during the recent years of 1868 and 1869, commencing with the Scully case

they that put us down whenever we rise for our rights? Wasn't it they who put down Smith O'Brien when he rose on Slieve-na-mon? Hugh was amongst the best of Ireland's friends that day; and wasn't it one of themselves that shot my own darlin' lying there before ye, though he took life for life, as became Black Hugh MacShane. It's them, I say, that keeps us down, and it's them I'll curse. And the blackest curse that a mother's hate can call down upon them will now rest upon their heads for ever. May the brain of the Peeler' ——

'CURSE NOT AT ALL!' exclaimed a firm clear voice in immediate proximity to the half-frantic mother. 'Curse not at all! Curses are like stones thrown upwards, they fall on the heads of those that throw them. Who are you that you should curse a fellow-creature, whether he be living or dead? Rise, woman! Rise, I say, from your unholy knees! I know and feel for a mother's grief, but will it be lighter when she has cursed his enemies, or softer when she sees their agony? Rise, woman; I say again, ye

at Ballycohey, and during the continuance of the murders of that unhappy period, there were more police quartered in Tipperary than in the whole province of Ulster.

shall curse no more whilst I stand here to-night.'

The man who spoke thus was tall, thin, and muscular ; he appeared to be about fifty years of age, and he was dressed in the habiliments of a Roman Catholic priest. He had silently moved towards the place where the frantic mother knelt, and had stood there, unobserved, immediately outside the stream of light which issued from the illuminated window, and which fell in such force upon the woman. He now came boldly forward, and taking her hand, commanded her to rise. The mother did not move from her knees ; again she threw back her dark locks, which, from the stooping posture she had assumed when about to commence her curse, had gathered around her face, and fixing her eyes on him, she said —

'And who and what are you that would interfere with a mother's hate, and the corpse of her dead son before her smiling approval on her words? Away, I say! Let me curse my curse out—no mortal man shall stop me!'

'I come to you in the power of no mortal man!' replied the priest ; 'and in the name of Him who made you, and before whom the spirit of Black Hugh now bends, I *command* you to

rise. You dare not disobey *me*. Remember in this solemn hour what once passed between us !’

Again he took the woman’s hand, and as he did, he fixed his eye firmly on hers (as keepers are said to do on lunatics), and all saw that she quailed beneath him. He slowly raised, almost lifted her from her kneeling posture; she yielded, her eyes still fixed on his, as if she was wholly unable to withdraw them. He led her gently inside the house, bade her sit down again amongst the women who were there, passed out through the kitchen, the men all rising respectfully, and disappeared in the darkness of the night.

There was a hushed murmur as he went out, and for a long time after no word was spoken above a whisper.

‘His Riverence spoilt the best of it,’ said Murtagh O’Brien to his companion. ‘It would have done your heart good to hear her curse the Peelers, and she was just going at it when he interfered.’

‘It was a tarr’ble scene to look at,’ replied his companion. ‘Maybe it’s all as well as it is. But what came over her that time when she refused to curse the young lord?’

‘No one knows what passed between him

and Black Hugh when he was dying,' replied Murtagh. 'Hugh would spake it only to himself; Hugh spoke kindly to him anyhow, and old Bridget thinks he blessed him. No one knows, barrin' the young lord himself, and no one dar' ask him about it. But faix, I'm thinkin' no one will touch or harm him now, no matter what he does. The people all has it that Black Hugh's ghost will pursue the man that harms him. That was a dreadful night, the night poor Hugh was shot, and ghosts were passing through the country like mad—we all seen them—not to talk of the two men that were killed.'

'It's time we were going home,' said his companion. 'I'll go bail Father James is watching us all this minute, though we don't see him. There's been enough of ghosts and killin' in the country for some time to come anyway. The people is beginning to move away. Come along, there will be no more sport since Father James got the better of the old woman.'

So saying, Murtagh and he harnessed their horses, and collecting their several companies they quietly left the scene of the wake. Others soon followed, and in a little time the corpse of Black Hugh MacShane was left in the care of

those more immediately connected with him, his mother still kneeling near him with her arms crossed upon her breast. He was buried the day but one after, a large concourse of the peasantry attending his remains to the grave. It was considered in the country that he had 'a very fine funeral.'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SKELLIG ROCKS.

THE young Earl of Killarney had no sooner completed his arrangements with his agent than he prepared to depart from the hospitable roof of Mr. Hardon. His time had not been idly spent during his stay, nor had his days been uneventful; and as he shook hands heartily with his kind host, he said—

‘I wonder shall I have to go through all this again when I return next year. I must admit there has been enough to damp any man’s ardour in favour of a residence in Ireland.’

‘You need not fear it,’ replied Mr. Hardon. ‘I have it from a sure source that your trial in the school of Ireland is over. They have found you as ready to fight when occasion required, as you are admitted to be generous and just. You have graduated in Ireland as a man of pluck as well as of kindness, and you may take my word for it you will have peace in Ireland for many a year to come.’

‘You surprise me,’ said the Earl. ‘I am sure you would not so express yourself if you did not think it; but have you any reasonable grounds for your opinion beyond your own conceptions of your wayward countrymen’s habits?’

‘I have it from the best authority,’ replied Mr. Hardon. ‘I have it from a man well known amongst the Ribbonmen, that you are safe for many a long year. Is it true, may I ask, that you had a private and somewhat friendly conversation with Black Hugh immediately before his death?’

‘It is perfectly true,’ replied the Earl; ‘but how you or anyone came to know it I am at a loss to conceive. I never mentioned it to any human being.’

‘I am well aware you did not,’ replied Mr. Hardon; ‘but there were others who saw it, though they did not hear what passed between you and Hugh; and it is generally reported that he gave you his blessing before he died, and announced that his ghost would haunt anyone who should ever lay a hand on, or injure you!’

‘What a strange idea!’ exclaimed the Earl.

‘Strange or not it is universally believed,’

replied Mr. Hardon ; ‘and moreover, I may mention, that there was a great wake held at Black Hugh’s cabin the night after he was shot, and his mother, a terrible old beldam, thought it part of her duty to curse some one for having caused the death of her son. One of the company suggested you as the proper person to curse, as the main originator of all the trouble in the country, and of the final catastrophe of Black Hugh’s and the policeman’s deaths ; but the wild old mother would not hear of it ; she knelt down outside the window where the corpse lay, and she became furious when they wanted her to curse you. She swore that she would curse the man that proposed it, if such a thing was ever mentioned to her again ; that Hugh had spoken kindly to you with his last breath ; and some said that he blessed you, and, at any rate, that you were seen to drop a tear over him as he lay gasping for breath, after the bullet had passed through his body.’

‘How strange all this is !’ exclaimed the Earl. ‘Such a wonderful mixture of truth, falsehood, and reality !’

‘But though the old lady would on no account curse you,’ continued Mr. Hardon, ‘she had no notion of giving up her intention

of cursing some one. So she was just about to commence her blackest curse on the police, or "Peelers," as she called them, as being the cause of all her trouble, and the mar-plots of every hopeful rising in Ireland, when Father James the priest came down upon her, and forced her to desist. It seems that Father James and she have some secret between them, and whenever she becomes particularly furious, he just hints at this secret, and then he fixes his eye upon her, and leads her off as mild as a sucking dove. What this secret may be I know not ; perhaps it may be nothing but some spell he possesses over this half-frantic beldam ; but, at all events, he put an end to her cursing for that time, greatly to the disappointment of the majority of the people, who take a sort of excited delight in hearing a good, round, out-and-out curse, and watching the victim afterwards to see if the curse comes true ! You, however, may go in peace at all events, for none will dare to harm the man that Black Hugh's mother did not dare to curse because her dead son had blessed him !'

'You are certainly a strange people,' replied the Earl thoughtfully. 'Everything is different from what one would expect. I little thought

that any prospect of peace or safety was likely to come to me from my accompanying the policeman when Black Hugh was shot before my eyes, and when he warned me that there were plenty ready to take up the cause for which he died.'

'The less you say about what passed between you and Black Hugh the better,' said Mr. Hardon laughing. 'Let the people have it their own way—that he gave you his blessing before he died. But as to things being different in Ireland from what one would expect, you must allow me altogether to dissent from you there. Scarcely anything happens in Ireland different from what I and others who have lived amongst the people expect, however different they may be from *your* expectations, judging Ireland as you do by the rule of your English experience. *You* thought that all the people would be in your favour, and in great delight when you set your improvements agoing. Mr. Snugg, as well as I, told you plainly you would set the whole country by the ears! *You now* know who was right. *You* thought that your duel with O'Dempsey, and the confessions you were compelled to make when cross-examined at that trial, would damage your character for ever. O'Sulevan and

every other Irishman who heard the trial knew, that so far from having damaged your character you had *made* it for ever in Ireland! You thought, perhaps, that the few words spoken in friendly warning by the dying Ribbonman Black Hugh showed you a long gallery of future danger through which to pass. But all who knew Ireland foresaw that the mere fact of a Ribbonman speaking privately to you in friendship in his death-struggle, was a sign that he had made his own peace with you, and that his friends were bound in honour not to hand down the quarrel. And thus, my dear friend, you can perceive that what appears to an Englishman to go all by contraries, an Irishman sees at once as likely to happen, and calculates on and acts on.'

'Be it so,' replied the Earl. 'I suppose in time one may come to know something of the motives which actuate your versatile countrymen. As yet they are little else than a dark enigma to me. I will not deny that you have taken some weight off my mind by the strange turn you assure me events have recently assumed. I care but little for popularity, and nothing could induce me to court it; but still it cannot be otherwise than a relief to find, suddenly, that one is not hated—that one is not absolutely set

apart as deserving only of death—and above all, that one's intentions and motives of kindness obtain some belief and credit. It is pleasant to leave Tipperary under this impression; and so, my friend, farewell. I should not have known this pleasure but for you.'

'Adieu, my lord; and remember what I say now—you will be the most popular man in Ireland the next time you visit your estate.'

On Lord Killarney's arrival at Derreen he found to his dismay that the family had left for Waterville, a village at the other side of the bay, some eighteen or twenty miles west of Derreen, and long celebrated for its salmon fisheries, amongst all lovers of that 'gentle' sport. He immediately resolved to follow them, and having obtained a boat to cross the bay, and ordered a carriage from Kenmare to meet him at Derryquin, he lost no time in joining the family of Derreen at the comfortable hotel at Waterville.

O'Sulevan had gone to Waterville under the pretext of private business. But he had other business besides, not the least important of which was to meet his brother Redmond, who had recently landed at Cork, and not wishing his arrival from America to be formally announced

at Derreen, had appointed the remote district of Waterville as the safest in which to meet and discuss the Phœnix cause with Donald, and others who still professed to have hopes in that adventure.

Donald, it must be confessed, was much startled at the arrival of Lord Killarney; but he put the best face on it he could—told him how glad he would be to show him the wonders of that wild locality, proposed a trip to the Island of Valentia; and above all recommended an expedition to the wonderful Skellig Rocks, lying out to sea some sixteen or eighteen miles from Waterville, and eight or nine from the nearest mainland.

Lord Killarney entered with enthusiasm into these various plans. He was much puzzled about Ierne. When he parted from her at Derreen, '*au revoir*' were the last words she uttered. But now, her manner towards him was cold and distant; she frequently called him 'my lord,' and when he gently endeavoured to assume towards her the freedom and unrestrained courtesy of his former intercourse, he felt that he was repelled, sometimes almost with severity. He was utterly at a loss to account for her change of manner; but feeling sure there must

be some cause for it, he applied one morning to her sister Kathleen, and enquired if anything unpleasant had lately happened to Ierne.

‘I am not aware that there has,’ replied Kathleen, ‘but there is no doubt her manner is somewhat changed, and changed to all of us as well as to you. It seems that a little time ago, she went on some secret expedition, taking Peggy with her as her maid, and I suspect Teague also, though he will not acknowledge it. They remained away two or three days, and neither of them would ever tell me where they went, or give me any clue to the object of their expedition. Since then her manner has been much altered, and I think something unusual must have happened, as her spirits have undergone alternations from the wildest delight at one time, to the most depressing despondence at another. It is plain she does not choose to confide the nature of this expedition either to me or to anyone else. Donald asked her about it, and she refused to give him any information. Of course I never now allude to it.’

‘How very odd!’ observed Lord Killarney. ‘And you have not the least idea where she went, or what was her object in going?’

‘Not the least,’ replied Kathleen. ‘Teague

knows all about it, and so of course does Peggy. But Ierne has cautioned them both, and so I do not press it.'

It was some satisfaction to Lord Killarney to find that it was not to him alone that Ierne's manner had become changed; and that something unusual had happened which she did not choose to tell, but which had evidently been the cause of the change. He set his brain actively to work, but could think of nothing likely to produce the change unless it were something connected with young O'Dempsey. He resolved accordingly to take an early opportunity of testing Ierne on that point.

The morning after his conversation with Kathleen was fixed on for an expedition to the magnificent Skellig Rocks. The expedition was considered as by no means devoid of danger. Calm weather was indispensable. It was then the month of December. The slightest disturbance of the sea renders it impossible to approach any place upon the rocks where even the most active seaman could land; and it frequently happens that the people living on these rocks (which now belong to the Government, and are used only for lighthouses,) are weatherbound there for months in winter, so that no boat or

vessel of any kind can hold communication with them from the main land. The three families now residing there are provisioned as if for a voyage half round the world.

But the weather had been so calm for the last few days, and the morning fixed on for the expedition was so bright and fine—perfect stillness in the air, and an unclouded sun overhead—that Donald, somewhat unwillingly it must be confessed, consented to a trial trip, on the distinct understanding that if any sea got up, or any wind arose, they were to return at once without a murmur.

The ladies and the Earl most gladly acquiesced in these conditions; and having prepared a strong rough seine-boat, with seats improvised for the occasion, the party left Waterville with six stout boatmen for a row of eighteen miles and back on the open Atlantic, and on a short winter's day. Donald himself took the helm. He was an able and experienced steersman; but he plainly told them he did not like the thing, though he was overborne by the entreaties of his sisters and the Earl.

Ierne now for the first time appeared to assume her former natural manner. Her eye brightened and her cheek glowed with pleasure,

as after a long pull across Ballinskelligs Bay the splendid rocks came out full in view before her. Donald had steered straight for 'Horse Island' from Waterville, and then hugging the north-western shore, it was not until Bolus Head was rounded that the rocks in all their majesty appeared. An exclamation of delight was uttered both by Kathleen and Ierne as their splendid pinnacles stood out magnificently in view, in which Lord Killarney could not avoid joining. Teague, who was one of the party (the police of late appearing not over anxious to take him), and Donald at the helm, seemed both to retain graver faces. But the sea appeared so calm—no motion affecting the boat but the strokes of the rowers, and the long deep swell of the Atlantic which in winter seems never to subside—that he smiled at their innocent joy, and seemed glad at the pleasure his acquiescence appeared to afford.

They had started about nine o'clock, and a steady pull of nearly four hours brought them under the rocks. The highest point is seven hundred feet above the sea, and nothing can possibly exceed the wildness of the scene around. The Atlantic there seems never to be at rest. On the calmest day it dashes and booms against

the caves and hollows in the rocks so that the sound can be heard for miles. Sea birds innumerable screamed and wheeled around, terrified at so unusual a sight as that of a boat near their lonely domain. And the savage gannet soaring aloft, made headlong plunges every now and then with the speed of lightning perpendicularly into the sea, to secure some unhappy mackerel which his keen eye detected under the water.

It was now one o'clock ; the day had retained its calmness, and the sun its brilliancy ; and Ierne, in the highest spirits, did not fail to chaff her brother for his forebodings of difficulty and danger.

‘All’s well that ends well,’ replied Donald, smiling good-humouredly, and rejoiced to see his favourite sister so much herself again. ‘Let us land now, and get luncheon as quickly as we can. We shall of course have to climb up some of the rocks, and the days are very short. Chaff as you will, Ierne, you can’t chaff the sun into staying long above the horizon in December, nor the winter storms from breaking against the Skellig Rocks.’

The party now landed—not without difficulty—and having hastily finished their luncheon, they began to explore the internal wonders of

the Rock. It is a strange place indeed, both in its ancient history and also in its present use. There are three families now always resident on the Rock, good houses having been built for them by the Government; and these families are answerable for the lights, which are always burning between sunset and sunrise, and are generally the first lights seen by vessels coming from the west across the Atlantic. At one time it was considered that two families were enough to perform the duties of the lighthouses, but it was found that these two families almost invariably quarrelled—though shut out from all intercourse with the rest of the habitable globe; and as their quarrelling led to their not speaking to each other, it became a serious matter whether the public might not suffer from the lights being neglected in consequence of each party adhering to some fancied right of priority in lighting or trimming these important beacons. But a clever member of the Ballast Board suggested a simple remedy for the difficulty—namely, always to secure that *three* families should reside on the Rock, and thus it might be calculated that two families at least would be always on speaking terms. The plan succeeded perfectly. Quarrels are now very rare, and when they do

occur, there is always an arbitrator ready to decide between them; this keeps all of them friends.¹

But the ancient history of the Skelligs is much more interesting and marvellous. It is manifest from the remains which still exist that a body of Christian monks at one time resided upon the Rock. How they supported life throughout the winter, or even throughout the summer, without the modern appliances of hermetically sealed provisions, it is hard to understand; but it is manifest that they did live there, and in considerable numbers.

Stairs have been cut in the solid stone from the landing place to the highest pinnacles of the Rock, and about half-way up are several of those strange 'bee-hives,' or huts formed of stones, each in the shape of a bee-hive, very low and dark, but still inside which a man could live. Around these bee-hives are some very ancient crosses, showing where the monks had been buried, and it is generally supposed that this strange settlement was made by some devoted brethren in the earliest period of the Christian age. Some even refer it back to the fifth or

¹ Fact.

sixth century, not long after St. Patrick had preached the Gospel in Ireland.

The whole party were deeply interested in these early works and remains of the ancient Christian Fathers, and dwelt long—too long—upon them. They soon found that but a short time remained to ascend to the highest top, and stand out on the strange ledge of rock which projects so fearfully over the sea, seven hundred feet below. This climax of the climbers' heroism they duly accomplished, and Lord Killarney and Ierne held hands together standing on this terrible ledge.

They now hastened down. The sun was getting very low, and it was nearly three o'clock in the afternoon. Donald pressed much that no further delays should take place, as though the nights were then moonlight, the open Atlantic was no place for a pleasure party in December in an open row-boat. As they were hastily making their way down the cliffs, and along the steep stairs which the monks had carefully cut so many centuries ago, they were met by the chief man in charge of the lighthouses on the Rock. He looked somewhat pale, and immediately calling Donald aside, he said—

‘I fear, Sir, some ugly weather is coming on.

The quicksilver has fallen half an inch within the last hour, and I see drifting clouds rising in the west, and "mares' tails" over the sky. I am unwilling to alarm you, but I am very uneasy at your facing the open sea with a party of ladies in an open fishing-boat such as that.'

'I have dreaded this all along,' returned Donald; 'and now the danger has come upon us. There is no use in hiding from ourselves that when the quicksilver falls suddenly at that rate, there is almost a certainty of a storm. What do you recommend us to do? It is still calm; have we any chance of getting inside Horse Island before the storm comes on?'

'You have a chance,' replied the man, who was an experienced Atlantic seaman. 'But it is only a chance, and if the storm comes on while you are out, I fear there would be small hope of your weathering it in such a cockleshell as that.'

'And if we remain?' asked Donald.

'If you remain we will take the best care of you we can; but you know enough of these seas to be aware that you may all be detained here for a month, or more, before it would be possible to leave.'

'This is most serious,' exclaimed Donald. 'I

know it all, and I also know that you do not in the least exaggerate the danger. I will immediately consult with Lord Killarney.'

Donald now called the Earl into hasty council, and it was finally resolved that they could not possibly run the risk of remaining on the Rock for five or six weeks, weather-bound, and that, come what would, they would start for Waterville without losing another moment.

They all now hurried down with the utmost expedition to the boat. At the landing-place, and holding the boat for them to get in, was Teague—looking very grave; all the men looked anxious and uneasy. They also had seen the 'mares' tails,' and the drifting scuds, and though they knew nothing of the falling mercury, they felt sure that a storm was approaching.

'Steady, men, steady,' exclaimed Donald to the anxious crew, as they sat with their oars grasped in their hands ready to push her off. 'Let the ladies in quietly—all right. Teague, go up to the bow and keep a sharp look out. You, my lord, will sit by me, and you will be kind enough to do as I tell you. Matters are serious, so I must require you to put yourself under strict orders. I see you have brought

down a couple of baling vessels,' he continued, addressing the old seaman. 'Hand them in by all means—that was well thought of. Push her off, boys, push her off, and may God protect us this night, for we shall need His special help!'

Donald took the helm, and a few vigorous strokes of the oars soon freed them from the moaning rocks.

'Safe home, and God bless you!' shouted the old seaman from the Rock, as the boat cleared out into the open sea.

'Make yourselves up well, young ladies,' said Teague in a whisper, addressing Kathleen and Ierne. 'As sure as I am a living man there is dirty weather in the west, and if it catches us out it will give us enough to do.'

The alarmed and anxious faces of every man on board, from Donald and Lord Killarney down to the meanest boatman, could not but have an effect upon the sisters. They knew there must be serious risk; so they did as ladies should always do under similar circumstances—they sat down quietly and calmly, neither affecting to undervalue nor to magnify the approaching danger.

As the boat cleared out into the open water,

it was impossible not to perceive that 'dirty weather,' as the sailors call it, was at hand. Not a breath of air yet stirred the sea where they were; its treacherous surface was smooth as glass, broken only by the ripple of the oars and the wake of the boat as she made her way rapidly towards Bolus Head. But Donald at the helm and Teague at the bow thought little of the glassy smoothness of the water around them; they kept their eyes fixed with scarcely a moment's intermission on the gathering storm in the north-west. The sky soon became covered with long streaky clouds, as if high up in the air a storm must be already raging. Along the horizon dark clouds were gathering fast, and small floating black messengers now and then sped rapidly across, as if balloons were sent up by the storm to see if all was ready for its approach. An hour thus passed, and still the sea was glassy, and such was the energy with which the men rowed that they had cleared more than half the distance between the Skelligs and Bolus Head, though the tide was running against them.

'We may do it yet!' exclaimed Donald, as he watched intently the accuracy of his steering and the gathering clouds in the north-west.

‘We may do it yet. The wind threatens so much from the north, and the balloon scuds are flying so much from that quarter, that if we can once get under the shelter of Bolus Head we are safe. We can land off Horse Island, at the coastguard station, and walk from that to Waterville. Pull, my men, pull for your lives! If ever ye pulled in earnest, and that for your own dear lives, pull now!’

He had scarcely said the words when the boat was felt by all on board to rise slowly and heavily on the glassy sea, as if some power from underneath had almost pushed it off the water. Having risen several feet high, it gradually lowered again, and down it went into the trough of the sea—the surface still smooth as glass around it—till the frightened crew appeared to be in a watery valley, with walls of water on each side.

‘Here it comes in earnest!’ said Donald, in a low voice to the Earl, ‘and this is its last messenger. The balloon scuds have been out for some time, and now comes the ground swell. The storm itself will quickly follow.’

‘Oh look! what can that be?’ exclaimed Ierne, as she pointed towards the north-west.

All eyes were instantly turned in the direc-

tion indicated, and every face became paler as they looked. Far away—upon the distant horizon, so that it could only be seen when the boat rose high on the now heaving sea, there seemed to arise a high white wall. At first it was so distant that none who had not seen the like before, could in the least tell what it was. But every rise of the sea, and every ‘hoist’ it gave the boat, the high white wall appeared to approach nearer and nearer.

‘Here comes the white squall!’ sang out Teague from the bow of the boat. ‘It will be upon us in ten or twelve minutes at farthest.’

‘My lord,’ said Donald, with a forced calmness in his voice and manner, ‘I need not tell you that we are all in the most imminent danger; nothing short of a miracle can save us now. The “white squall,” as Teague calls it, will be upon us in ten or fifteen minutes, and we cannot possibly get under Bolus Head before that. There is but one hope, one chance, and I must depend upon you to carry it into immediate effect. The ladies have quantities of india-rubber rugs and cloaks. Let them at once give up all these, cut them up into whatever sizes are necessary, and nail them down over the boat, so as to form a kind of water-

proof-covered deck. You must, of course, leave space for every man to sit in, but fasten the waterproofs close round each man's body, so that as little water as possible can find its way in. Teague has hammer and nails—he never goes to sea without them—don't lose a moment. My sisters will give you all the help they can.'

Lord Killarney saw in an instant that a kind of half-water-tight lifeboat could thus be constructed in a very few minutes. He told the ladies Donald's plan. They entered into it with spirit, and in less than six or seven minutes the hitherto open fishing-boat was tightly covered with a waterproof deck, leaving room only for the bodies of the crew and passengers to appear above the drum-tight surface.

Once more all eyes were turned to the north-west. The white squall was within a mile of them, rushing forward with the speed of the wind which created it. They could hear the roar of the foaming wave as, maddened by the rushing wind, it dashed towards them at the rate of twenty miles an hour. It stood up high, a lofty torrent of foam some eight or ten feet perpendicular, a broken rushing cataract of mixed green and white; nor did it seem

possible to a single individual in that poor little craft that she could for a moment withstand the shock.

‘We must put her head round, and drive right into it,’ said Donald to the Earl, who had again seated himself beside him. ‘It is our only chance—we may possibly come out half drowned on the other side. If it catches us sideways or on the stern, nothing can save us.’ Here he stood up in the boat.

‘Pull the starboard oars hard!’ he shouted. ‘We must dash her head right into it, or no power can save us.’

But the men had lost their nerve; and, terrified at the prospect of almost certain death, and unaccustomed like men-of-war’s men mechanically to obey the orders of their superiors, they laid down their oars in helpless misery, and began to blubber and cry and wring their hands in an agony of terror and despair.

Again the firm clear voice of Donald O’Sullivan was heard above the white squall’s rushing sound as it came within a few hundred yards of the boat.

‘Terence O’Dogherty,’ he said, ‘take your oar in your hand this very instant, and pull, or I will shoot you through the head! Donald

O'Sulevan keeps his word.' And so saying, he drew a revolver from his pocket, and cocked it within three or four yards of the stroke-oar's head.

The man sulkily obeyed. 'I may as well be drowned as shot,' he said, and prepared to pull as directed.

'Do all of you as you see Terence O'Dogherty do,' shouted Donald again. 'The first man that disobeys I will shoot him dead though the squall was upon us; this is no time for nonsense.' With a suddenness which surprised Donald himself, they all grasped their oars and prepared to obey his orders.

'We have three minutes yet, boys,' again cried Donald aloud, and taking out a bottle of whisky which had not yet been opened, from a basket at his feet, he struck off the top of the neck of the bottle with the iron barrel of his pistol, and, handing it to Terence, he told him to 'take a pull at it himself, and to give some to each of the men.' They all took it, and, strange to say, at such a time they all seemed much the better for it.

'Steady, now, boys—keep her head right up to the squall; don't blow yourselves, for you will need all the breath in your bodies just

now ; but when I tell you to pull, pull like mad right into the foaming wall. It is possible we may come out alive at the other side, but any way it's our only chance.'

All were silent—on came the rushing squall. For a moment Lord Killarney and Ierne exchanged glances. But it was only for a moment. And amidst the roar of the foaming cataract, now almost upon them, O'Sulevan's voice was heard again—

'Pull for your lives, boys ! Dash her into the very heart of it !'

For a minute—nearly for two—nothing was heard or seen ; and if the old seaman on the Skellig Rocks had watched the fate of the little fishing-boat with his telescope, he would probably have closed his glasses and returned to his home with the sorrowful impression that he had seen the last of the family at Derreen and of his friends the fishermen at Waterville. But it was not so—drenched, half-drowned, almost senseless, but still alive, the occupants of the gallant little boat, secured as she was by the well fastened waterproof deck, emerged from this fearful dive, and rose again at the other side of the foaming wall. There had been a strange singing in the ears, a closing of

the eyes, a sound of sweetest music, and a soft —almost luxurious and painless—sensation of the passage from life to death. And as the boat once more peeped slowly above the water, like a porpoise to breathe fresh air, the passengers and little crew stared at each other in strange perplexity, and with wondering eyes, as if they had never met before.

Donald O'Sulevan was the first to recover his full senses and to appreciate their exact situation. The boat, notwithstanding the waterproof deck, was more than half full of water, and rose slowly and sluggishly over the heavy sea which was running behind the wall of foam from which they had just emerged.

'Bale out, boys!' he cried. 'Bale out, and we may yet be saved. At it, Teague, like lightning, with the vessel lent us from the Rock, and do you, my lord, do the same. Kathleen! Ierne! rouse yourselves! Each of you take off your hats, your shoes, and help to keep her afloat by baling out the water, or we have not a chance of our lives. Who would have thought we should ever have come out of that terrible wave alive? Bale out and keep her afloat, and we may all yet do well.'

The men had now begun to recover their

strength if not their senses, and, yielding to the repeated commands of Donald, they pulled once more lustily at their oars, whilst Teague, the Earl, and the ladies worked vigorously at the baling process. The sea ran high at the rear of the white squall, but what with the perfection of Donald's steering, and the water-proof deck which had been so well improvised, and the constant baling out the water which broke in green seas over them almost every minute, there did appear some distant hope that they might get under the protection of Bolus Head before another squall came on.

Lord Killarney had moved towards Teague at the bow of the boat in order better to help the baling. And Teague and he now worked with a will at the only labour which gave them a chance of life.

'Well now,' said Teague, addressing the young Earl, 'I have gone through many a thing in my life, but I never went through the likes of *that* before. Oh, but it was tarr'ble in earnest! And to think of the young ladies standing it too, goin' into it as cool and quiet as if going to their morning's meal, and comin' out alive! Well now, do you think we shall

ever see dry land again, or shall we be swallowed up in the sea after all ? ’

‘ I can’t tell, Teague,’ replied the Earl. ‘ It seems to me that the hope of reaching land again is very small indeed. But after what we got through a while ago, we ought on no account to despair.’

Teague nestled up close to the Earl, and, working hard all the time with his baling bucket in his hand, he said—

‘ I have a sacret I want to tell ye: maybe some of us will never live to meet again in this world, and I wouldn’t like to lave it and ye not to know what I am going to say.’

‘ What is it, Teague? It must be a secret worth hearing that you think of telling at such a time as this.’

‘ Nothing but the thought of instant death before me, and that maybe we would have to go through such another wave as that, would ever make me tell it,’ replied Teague, still working hard at the baling.

‘ What is it, Teague? Tell it out at once; this is no time for delay.’

‘ Do you see that young girl there?’ asked Teague, ‘ working away like any of us, baling out the water with one of the boatmen’s hats?’

‘Of course I do,’ replied the Earl.

‘*She would die for you!*’ said Teague, ‘and she would die, moreover, a thousand deaths, before she would tell you so herself!’

‘What makes you say that?’ asked the Earl anxiously.

‘I know it,’ replied Teague. ‘Didn’t she save your life twice already? Once, as you know, by having the doctor within call when you were shot by young O’Dempsey, and once more besides when you knew nothing about it?’

‘When was that? Tell me, when was that?’ exclaimed the Earl; even the fearful scene of danger in which they were placed being wholly unable to overcome his deep anxiety.

‘Spake low,’ said Teague, ‘or maybe she’d hear us, and she’d never forgive me if she knew I let it out, and no more I would but that some of us may never see the land again. Do ye remember the night ye were waylaid by Black Hugh MacShane, and that he and the constable was shot together in the wood in Tipperary?’

‘I should think I did,’ replied the Earl. ‘It was a night I am not likely to forget.’

‘I was there that night, looking at ye, as ye rode quietly by, little dreamin’ that it was a turn of a hair and ye were a dead man.’

‘You!’ exclaimed the Earl. ‘How came you on the road that night?’

‘I’ll tell ye,’ said Teague hastily. ‘Stoop down near me that no one may know what I am saying, for Miss Ierne is as sharp as a needle only she is nigh well drowned this minute. I was there looking at ye. I knew ye were coming, for ye were well watched by the boys; and they were sworn to shoot ye, so they were, at that very time and place. I heard it all planned when out on my keeping amongst them, and so, says I to myself, they’ll never shoot him if I can help it. Well, off I goes to Miss Ierne straight down to Derreen from Thurles, and tells her all about it. “Let me alone,” says she, “I’ll baffle them or lose my life in it;” so she bid Peggy bring a big white sheet with her, and may I never if she didn’t go off to Thurles, myself, and her and Peggy, and come out that night with the sheet upon her, and stand in the very spot where Black Hugh was to have stood to shoot ye. Black Hugh was half mad, so he was, betwixt the fear and anger that was on him, and when he saw her standin’ there, he thought she was Tom Duffy’s ghost. “Who are ye?” says he. “Tell me, or I’ll fire!” and up he puts his gun to his

shoulder. I thought the sight would have left my eyes, and I was just going to fling my she-laggh at his head to stop him, when I hears your honour on the horse comin' down the road. By the powers, Miss Ierne never flinched a bit ; but turning on him, and he with the gun up at her, she says, "Ye have killed enough already, so ye have, and ye shan't hurt a hair of his head that's comin'. Ye have blood enough already," says she, or something like that, for I disremember now the exact words. Away slinks Black Hugh, frightened out of his wits, black villain as he was, and swearin' Tom Duffy's ghost had saved you that time. And away went Miss Ierne, cut across the road, and off through the fields, frightening your horse and the constable, and all the rest of them who just saw the white sheet floating by like a cloud of the night. Well, Peggy was in the plantation, and took the sheet and rolled it up, and away we went across the country to Thurles, and home to Derreen the very next day ; and sorra one from that day to this ever knew a word of it, or ever could understand how it was that your honour's life was saved from Black Hugh that night by a white spirit in the wood.'

The Earl drew a long breath. 'Is this indeed

all true?' he said. 'Do I hear you rightly—am I mad or dreaming, or have my senses left me in such a terrible hour as this?'

'It's all as true as gospel,' replied Teague; 'and only death's starin' all of us in the face this minute you would never have heard one word of it out of my lips this blessed night.'

'This clears up all!' said the Earl. 'Say nothing of it to any human being. Above all, never let *her* know I know it.'

'Sorra fear of me,' said Teague; 'but I'm glad I told ye, for ye will think more of her hereafter, if ever we get through this adventure. Bedad it's the worst that came upon us yet. But she'd die a thousand deaths sooner than see a hair of your head injured, so she would. In troth, Peggy is fond of me enough, and more than is quite convanient sometimes, and good rason I have to know it; but she couldn't hould a candle to Miss Ierne about your honour. And it's truth I'm tellin' you this very minute when I say that.'

'Enough,' said the Earl; 'enough. What you have now told me unravels a long and tangled skein and makes all as plain to me as day. Should we ever outlive this night, I hope to repay, in some degree, all I owe your young mistress.'

The exertions which had been used—all parties working with a will—had their effect in keeping the boat alive in the terrible sea by which they were now surrounded. They were now fast closing on Bolus Head, and if once inside that point they were safe. The men pulled gallantly. Kathleen and Ierne, drenched as if they had been actually immersed in the sea for the last hour, still plied the baling with the softened hats of the men; but they helped well and usefully. Teague and the young lord redoubled their exertions. O'Sulevan steered the small craft to perfection, watching each wave and surmounting it by his skill and courage; and at last, with a ringing cheer which was heard above the roar of the waves and the screaming of the sea-birds, the boat glided suddenly into calm waters under the shelter of Bolus Head. They soon reached the coast-guard station, where having landed and taken some slight refreshment, they started for a long walk to Waterville. They reached the hotel very late, wet and weary, but still unbroken in spirit, and thankful for the merciful escape they had that night experienced.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOLY ISLAND.

THE party breakfasted late the day after the expedition to the Skelligs. All seemed disposed for quiet. Kathleen remained all day in her room. Donald had joined his brother Redmond, who was also at the hotel, and they remained shut up privately by themselves. It was not until late in the afternoon that Ierne appeared on the gravel walk outside the hotel door, and bent her steps towards the shore of the lovely Lough Currāne.

The hotel is situated close to this beautiful lake, and directly between it and the sea. The lake is very large, interspersed with numerous islands, and affords continuous sport to the lovers of salmon-fishing in the season. It is an 'open lake,' and all have a right to fish there; but none except the initiated are likely to enjoy much sport. What precise initiation is necessary to secure success on Lough Currāne, I

must leave those to find out who visit it. A silver key has seldom failed to open the lock of the casket.

Ierne had no sooner appeared upon the walk than she was joined by Lord Killarney. He accompanied her to the water.

‘Shall we get into a boat?’ she said; ‘I see one here belonging to the hotel. We need no boatmen, and unless our expedition of yesterday has quenched your love for open boats, I think we should be pleasanter in it than walking. I confess I am tired to-day.’

‘By all means let us get into the boat,’ replied the Earl; and handing in Ierne, and placing the tiny oars in their rowlocks, he shoved off upon the open lake.

‘I am tired,’ she said again. ‘Row gently; in fact, don’t row at all. Let us drift. I have been drifting alone all my life. Let us drift a little in company.’

Lord Killarney looked intently at Ierne. He wished to see if her words conveyed anything more than an ordinary thought. But he could see nothing which indicated any hidden meaning on her part. She was very pale. She looked very tired—as she said—and there was

an appearance of extreme languor and dejection about her which he had not before observed.

‘I fear you are overcome,’ he said gently, almost tenderly, ‘by the terrible scenes of yesterday. I have been in many a scrape and many a serious danger, but never in my life did I witness anything so terrible as our rush into the foaming squall. Donald must have unbounded nerve and self-reliance to have ventured on such a fearful plunge. And you,’ he continued, ‘must have more than woman’s courage to have borne it so calmly, without a murmur or a cry.’

‘My nerves have been put to a severer test than that,’ replied Ierne, ‘and not very long ago either. But it was indeed a terrible scene. I caught your eye for a moment before we entered the foaming wall, and it was as calm and collected as it is now. Have you no fear of death?’

‘Not much,’ replied her companion. ‘But I also caught *your* eye. It was brighter, far brighter, than it is now, and you rushed into the foam as if you were dashing up the breach of a fortress. Have *you* no fear of death?’

‘Not much,’ she replied smiling. ‘I return you your own answer.’

‘Would you object to tell me why?’ asked the Earl.

‘For many reasons,’ she replied. ‘Perhaps the most prominent at present is that I do not care to live.’

‘I know of few who have better reasons to wish to live than you have,’ observed Lord Killarney.

‘How so?’ replied Ierne. ‘Tell me how that can be. A lonely girl, without father, mother, or fortune. Of an ancient race indeed, and high born, but of a conquered race; whose birth is scarcely acknowledged by the present high ones of the earth, and whose nation is looked down upon and despised by her conquerors. I know—I feel within me—that under other circumstances—in a happier country, and where our race was appreciated as it deserved, I could do high deeds myself, and encourage one I loved to do such high and noble deeds as would carve out a place for him in the history of the world. But this can never be. Why then should I wish to live? Or is it any wonder when you ask me if I fear death, that I should answer in your own words —“not much”?’

As she spoke thus her cheek glowed with

enthusiasm, her eye glistened, and the languor of her manner was gone. But in a moment all had returned. And the same weary feeling of 'I am tired,' accompanied by excessive languor, again seemed to settle upon her features.

Lord Killarney did not speak. He did not move, nor give a single stroke of his oar. He suffered the little boat to drift quietly into the middle of the large lake; and they soon found themselves near the well-known burial-place named in the locality 'Church Island.' The ruins of an ancient Catholic church are still visible on this 'holy island,' surrounded with tombstones and graves. It is a favourite burial-place of the people.

Drifting slowly towards this island, driven by the gentle south-western breeze which had succeeded the fierce north-western of the day before, they soon found themselves touching the shingle beach close to where the ancient church of St. Finan's had once stood. Lord Killarney proposed that they should land and examine the ruins and the island. They did so in silence; they walked over the green graves and amongst the stunted ruined walls of this once celebrated holy island.

'It is a type of our ruined race,' said Ierne

sadly, as she moved again towards the boat. 'A stranger would scarcely notice our existence, still less our ancient grandeur. Antiquaries may exhume these monuments, and unknown or unread historians may tell of our wondrous learning, our proficiency in arms and arts; no one cares for—no one believes what they say. But hark!—listen!—what is that wailing cry which comes so mournfully across the water?'

They looked in the direction from whence the cry had come, and to their surprise they saw a little fleet of some thirty boats or upwards making slowly towards the island. Again the cry rose wild and deep upon the waters, and the pure Irish 'keen,' more musical and solemn than it is ever heard in Tipperary, was wafted towards the holy island. Nothing can be more affecting, nothing more striking, than this water-funeral¹ on Lough Currâne. Two boats, with mourners in each, preceded the hearse-boat with the coffin. There was some little difficulty in getting the coffin on shore, and then, when all were landed, the little party proceeded towards the grave. This was the signal for the wildest

¹ The writer of these pages has witnessed this interesting ceremony.

burst of sorrow ; and such a keen arose, and sank, and rose again, and swelled to such a mournful height as would touch the hardest heart. The priest met them at the grave, and the sad ceremony having been completed, and the mourners having wandered about the island, each probably visiting the grave of some loved one resting there, the boats were again launched, and the people departed as they came. There was no keening as they went away.

Lord Killarney and his companion waited till all had gone, except one small boat which still lingered on the shore. The persons who came in this boat were few—an old man, an old woman—both pretty hale and fresh—and a young girl. These three still remained upon the island, and sitting down near the grave of him who had just been buried, they gave way to the wildest expressions of sorrow.

After a little the violence of their grief seemed to subside, and they sat in silent sadness without speaking.

‘Let us go near them,’ said Ierne. ‘It might be a relief to them if they could tell us their sorrow.’

They went to them accordingly, and Ierne, advancing a little, said to the aged woman—

‘You seem in great grief; was it your son who was buried here to-day?’

‘It was indeed, my lady,’ replied the woman in excellent English; ‘my only son, the darling of my heart—acushla machree, he was.’

‘And what did he die of?’ asked Ierne.

‘He was drowned, my lady,’ replied the woman. ‘He was drowned in the deep sea trying to save the life of another. Oh, my lady, it was he was the brave, brave boy—the finest, noblest boy he was in the whole parish round. There was none like him, nor ever will be again. He was beautiful as the sun, and bright and shining as the stars.’

‘How did it happen?’ asked Ierne, who now perceived that talking of her son who was gone was a great relief to the mourners.

‘I’ll tell you, my lady,’ replied the old man. ‘I was present myself and saw it all. And I’ll tell you the raal truth. We were joined in a boat with others, my lady, that is, I and mine were joined in a fishing-boat with others, and each had our own share of the profits. The weather was very fine of late, until the terrible storm of yesterday, and the fishing was pretty good, and the nights were bright and starlight, and it was a pleasure to go out some nights like

these, and see the takes of fish, the sea like liquid fire, and the fish like nuggets of gold darting through the brimming wave.¹ Well, my lady, the girls were all for coming out to see the fish taken that night. Why wouldn't they poor things, sure weren't those they loved best to be with them? Our brave boy, Florence, him that now lies deep under the sod, was going to get married to this young girl by our side, and another boy of the MacSwinys took out his sweetheart with him too; and a merry party they were, my lady, on that bright starlight night as ever you would wish to see—playing and joking and coorting one another—you would think it was lambs in spring skipping with the dint of joy. Well, my lady, we met with a great "school of fish," the finest school of mackerel you could see, and down went the nets from the boats, and our partners and we began to haul in brave and steady, full sure of a grand take of fish; when whatever happened, I don't know—but somehow he lost his balance, and Tim MacSwiny fell overboard. Well, my lady, there was a terrible cry raised,

¹ The sea has frequently this appearance at night under peculiar circumstances of the atmosphere. The fish look as if they were on fire darting through it.

for Tim couldn't swim, and we all saw him going down fast to the bottom, and Tim's sweetheart—who was in the boat—you'd have thought she'd go mad altogether. She was for leaping in after him, for she said she couldn't live to see him die. With that our darlin' girl here went over to try and comfort her. But she dashed her from her—the creature couldn't help it—she dashed her from her, so she did, and cried out that you'd think her heart-strings would burst—"Let me alone, Bridget dear, let me alone! You have your sweetheart by you still, while mine is gone down into the sea—what do you know of grief like mine?" Well, my lady, our brave boy that's gone couldn't stand the like of that, so he just slips off his shoes and his coat and waistcoat, and "Father," says he to me, "tie a rope round my body, and if I go down to the very bottom, I'll try and find Tim MacSwiny." "Don't, darlin', don't," says Bridget here, clinging round him. "Why would ye throw a good life after one that's gone?" "Let me alone, darlin'," said our brave boy, "let me alone, I say! I'll never hear Mary reproach you again as she did this night, and say I didn't do my best. Give me plenty of rope, father," says he; and he

stood up on the gunwale of the boat, and down he dived like a seal into the water. Oh, my God! I'd have pulled him back if they'd have let me. It was the fearfulest thing, my lady, that any man ever saw; my boy looked all on fire as he went down, never father saw such a sight before; down he went deeper and deeper, until I lost sight of him altogether, and then, my lady, I lost my senses, and down I fell fainting in the boat. What happened after that I never knew, and I never liked to ask; but when I came to my senses again, my brave boy was lying dead in the bottom of the boat before me—the rope still about his body—and a piece of Tim MacSwiny's coat in his hand clutched so tight that no man could take it from him.'

The girl and the mother had stood still whilst the father spoke; they scarcely seemed to breathe, so intent were they listening to the story, though they had heard it, perhaps, twenty times before. The tear drops filled and glistened in the dark eyes of the girl, but she never closed them, nor dashed the tears aside, so deeply was she moved at the father's mournful tale. But no sooner had he done than she threw herself on the fresh-made mound in a renewed agony of grief, and abandoning herself to the wildest

paroxysm of sorrow, she lay moaning and wailing, lying at full length over the grave.

Ierne moved towards her, and taking her gently by the hand, motioned her to rise. The girl instinctively obeyed; and looking half wildly at the beautiful lady before her, she asked her who she was.

‘You cannot know me,’ said Ierne, ‘but I am one who can sympathise in your sorrow. Kiss me, child;’ and she took the young girl in her arms, and gently kissed her on each cheek. ‘Go home now, child, you have given way to sorrow enough—too much indeed. Go home with these old friends, and be a comfort to them, for a time at least, until you get over this sad sorrow.’

The girl obeyed at once, and taking the mother’s hand she went silently to the boat, and entered it without a word.

‘Was Tim MacSwiny saved?’ asked Ierne of the old man whom she had joined again. ‘Tell me, was he saved?’

‘No, my lady, we never knew—no one ever will know till the day of the great resurrection, what happened with those two men below. That my boy met with him down in the sea, there can be no doubt; for he had a piece of

his coat clutched in his hand ; but he was a long time down, and when he came up—and they all said it was mighty hard to draw him to the surface—he was clean drowned as if he had been under water for a month.’

‘It is a sad story,’ said Ierne, tears filling her eyes ; ‘I wish I could soften your sorrow.’

‘You have done so already, my lady,’ said the man with the tact and good breeding of his race. ‘You have done so already. And so has this young gentleman also, who has shown how he felt for us by his countenance.’

Each party now stepped into their separate boats, and rowed gently towards home.

There were but few words spoken as the boat glided calmly through the water, on their way to the Lake Hotel. At length Lord Killarney rested on his oars, and after a short pause he said—

‘Ierne, the thought that we must part to-morrow weighs heavily on my mind. Since the hour when we first met on the top of the Caha Mountains until the present moment, you have been the guiding star—I might say, the saviour, of my life. You cannot be ignorant of my love. Will you continue to brighten by your presence that life you have more than once preserved,

and let us be companions in our joy and sorrow, as we have often been in danger?’

Irne listened calmly until the Earl ceased speaking. His language neither frightened nor surprised her. She answered with quiet dignity—

‘No, Lord Killarney—I entreat you speak not so. You are too generous, too noble, to trifle with the affections of one whom you have always treated with confidence and respect. And yet how can you talk of marriage to me? The wolf and the lamb, the hawk and the dove, might as well talk of union, as the Norman lord and the Irish Celtic girl.’

‘Say not so, I entreat of you,’ exclaimed Lord Killarney. ‘You do me but justice when you say that I would disdain to trifle with the affections of anyone, much less of one whom I love and admire as I do you. My position is not unknown in the world. I now offer to share it with you. As my wife—my honoured, loved, and cherished wife—I would ask you to return my love; and who will then dare to say that the Celtic princess is unfit to mate with the Norman lord? Why do you refuse me? You know—you cannot doubt—the sincerity of my deep attachment to you. When last I saw

you, your words were "*au revoir*." What can have changed you since? I had then good hopes that I was not wholly indifferent to you. Have I done ought since to lower me in your estimation? Dear Ierne, for you are indeed dear to me, tell me I may have hopes—tell me that you love me.'

Ierne was silent for a few moments, and then she said—

'It cannot be; I am sure your better judgment would tell you so, if once you were away from Ireland. The romance of our meeting—the interest of the various scenes through which we have passed together—have wrought upon your susceptible imagination, and have induced you to make a declaration which you would think of very differently some three or four months hence. I will not deny—it would be mere coquetry in me to deny—that your presence has been to me as no other man's has ever been before. But my pride is equal to, perhaps even exceeds, your own. I will never mate with one whom the world chooses to think so much above me, as it considers the Earl of Killarney above a daughter of the O'Sulevans of Dunboy.'

'You do not, you cannot, know the deep in-

justice you do yourself in speaking thus,' exclaimed the Earl. 'Believe me I speak truly when I say that I consider it an honour to ally my name with one of the descendants of the ancient princes of Ireland. But even if this were otherwise, surely all such considerations should vanish at once before the deep and holy love which fills my breast towards you.'

'No, Lord Killarney, no,' returned Ierne gravely. 'I am but a young girl, and have seen but little of the world; but I well know the feelings of the people amongst whom you live in England towards those of my religion and race. The expressions in which you now indulge no doubt you fully feel, but they are little else than the effervescence of the romantic life you have been lately leading in Ireland. More mature reflection will tell you that our union can never be. You will see these matters with other eyes as soon as you return to England. You have come like a vision upon my brain. Pass away, I entreat you, though you leave but a wreck behind.'

'Speak not so, dear Ierne, I beseech you, speak not so; I will not, I cannot, believe that I am altogether indifferent to you. It is not presumption makes me think so; your very

language now convinces me that you could love me, but that some obstacle rises to your view which is as yet hidden from mine. I must leave for London to-morrow. It was to see you, and to speak to you as I have now done, that I followed you here ; such was my only motive. Tell me, I entreat of you, that you can love me—that you will consent to be my wife.’

The whole frame of Ierne shook and quivered convulsively as Lord Killarney spoke these words. She remained for some minutes motionless. At last she spoke.

‘Lord Killarney, it cannot be. You have offered me your hand, and I have declined it ; gratefully, respectfully, and with a full sense of the honour you have done me, but—decidedly. There let the matter rest. No human being shall ever know from me what has passed between us this day. It is past and gone for ever, and if it cannot be forgotten, at least let it not be forced again to our remembrance. It is possible we shall meet next spring in London. Donald will have business there, and he has promised to take me with him. Before then you will have had time to view your Irish trip in a very different light from that in which

you see it now. The romance of the situation will be gone, and English air and society will have sobered your views of Irish life. Let us meet—if we meet at all—as friends, but as nothing more. Long before that time passes you will yourself have seen that there are insuperable obstacles to our union, which the fever of your present temperament has scarcely permitted you to dwell upon, but which no one in his calmer moments would view more seriously than yourself. Farewell, Lord Killarney! By that time also you will be able to appreciate the severity of self-denial, and to think kindly and generously of the Celtic Irish girl.’ The boat, as she spoke, touched the little pier, within a few yards of the hotel. She smiled sadly as she held out her hand to the Earl. He seized it, and covered it with kisses mingled with tears. Ierne gently withdrew it, and leaving him to recover his self-possession under the pretence of fastening the boat, she walked slowly to the hotel, nor did she appear again till dinner-time.

CHAPTER X.

DREAMS PAST AND FUTURE.

THE ladies retired early after dinner, and no sooner had they left their seats than Donald proposed to introduce his brother Redmond to Lord Killarney.

‘I owe you some apology,’ he said, ‘in proposing to introduce my brother. I fear you will think him little short of an open rebel against England. And he is one of those who never minces matters; he expresses his thoughts freely, as he would freely draw his sword in the cause of unhappy Ireland.’

‘I should like to meet him,’ said Lord Killarney. ‘I like to meet earnest men wherever or however they may be found. If his opinions are sound or worthy of any consideration by practical and sensible men, doubtless he can maintain them by arguments as well as by the sword or bullet.’

‘No doubt he can. I will go and call him.’

In a very few minutes Redmond O'Sulevan entered the room. He was above the middle height, firmly and strongly knit, and there was a suppleness and elasticity in his most ordinary walk which showed he was active as well as strong. His hair was much lighter than Donald's, approaching to red or sandy, and he wore a large beard and moustache which almost covered his mouth. His eye was fierce, and rapid in its motions ; and there was a quickness and resolution in his whole manner and bearing which showed a man accustomed to decide promptly, and to act vigorously on his decision.

He bowed to Lord Killarney as he entered, haughtily and stiffly enough, as if he was resolved not to acknowledge the smallest difference in their positions. Lord Killarney saw his temper at a glance ; but his native tact and good breeding set O'Sulevan at once at his ease. Rising courteously to meet him, he shook him warmly by the hand, told him how glad he was to make his acquaintance—that his residence at his brother's house had been one of the most agreeable events of his life ; and that he hoped to learn as much of Ireland and her feelings from him as he had already learned from his

brother and his charming sisters. He begged him to be seated, pushed the wine to him as if he had been an old acquaintance, and continued—

‘I have known your brother so well, and have heard him so often talk of you, that I feel to know you almost as well as him. And now what news from America? I hear you have only just landed. Are the friends of Ireland (he smiled as he spoke) as active as ever in her cause, and may we expect a ship-load of sympathisers to land soon in Bantry Bay?’ His whole manner was so kind, so cordial, and so free, and his allusion to Bantry Bay was thrown in with such gentle pleasantry, that Redmond could not take offence; and being thus at once set at ease on the subject which was nearest his heart, no difficulty was afterwards experienced between them in mutual exchange of opinions.

‘I fear Ireland has seen the last of Bantry Bay expeditions,’ replied Redmond sadly. ‘At one time I thought that America would have taken up our cause, and the English Government thought so too, for they sent round the Channel fleet to cruise in those very waters. But it is useless to conceal it—all hope is now gone.’

‘And suppose you had succeeded in inducing the Americans to come over and take up Ireland’s cause, as you express it, what steps would you then have taken?’

‘Beyond all doubt we would have proclaimed an Irish republic under the protection of the United States of America,’ was Redmond’s prompt reply. ‘Ireland was almost everywhere ready for revolt. In Kerry they would have risen to a man, though they are a quiet and peace-loving people. The fire would have raged in Cork; and once more we should have heard from Skibbereen to Mallow the wild cry of “McCarthy aboo!” In Tipperary, where they are made of more determined though less inflammable materials, they would have risen in their own way, and the landlords would have had no easy time of it; whilst in the midland counties, Meath, Westmeath, King’s County, Queen’s County, and Kildare, a vast majority of the people would have deliberately taken up arms the moment they had any centre of organisation round which to rally. But all this was useless, worse than useless, and weak as water, unless an American fleet had entered Bantry Bay with twenty thousand men and materials of war on board—resolved to try the issue of a

battle with the English fleet at sea, and with the English troops on land.'

'And is it fair to ask what prospects there are now of such a consummation as that?' enquired the Earl.

'You should not see me here at present, my lord, if there was the remotest chance of it,' replied Redmond. 'All hope is now at an end.'

'Then I suppose we may look for quiet times in Ireland for the future?' observed the Earl, 'barring of course the occasional shooting of a landlord in Tipperary and a few midland counties which have a peculiar tendency that way?'

'Far from it, my lord,' replied Redmond. 'Ireland is like Lazarus in the grave, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. She is not dead, but sleepeth. She will yet arise in her might and demand her full measure of justice. Even at this moment there is in America a far more formidable society than that of the Phoenix men springing into existence, and extending far and near over the country. The English Government do not seem to be aware of it, or, if they are, they have taken no public notice of it. Already it comprises thousands of Irishmen in America of every class and creed, all burning

with the one desire to see the ancient country free from the yoke of England.'

'And has the new Society to which you allude assumed any distinctive name as yet?' enquired the Earl.

'It has,' replied Redmond O'Sulevan. 'They call themselves "Fenians," a name derived from one well known in ancient Irish history—one of her earliest warriors and lawgivers—long before the English conquest. Fenius Farsa was Ireland's greatest chieftain and scholar, when the English were rude barbarians, wandering with painted bodies in the woods.'

'Without meaning in the least to disparage the eminence of that distinguished personage,' observed Lord Killarney, 'it seems to me scarcely possible that any society assuming the name of one who lived in a period so remote, could really hope to produce any impression on modern laws or institutions. Surely if practical revolution was their object, they would assume some more recent name as a watchword round which to rally.'

'That is a very natural mistake into which your lordship has fallen,' observed O'Sulevan. 'But if you want to rouse the enthusiasm of an Irishman, talk to him, not of the present,

but of the past—of days long gone by. Tell him of Ireland's ancient glory, of her learning, of her arts, and her sciences; of her schools and saints when England was in utter barbarism—all quite true, my lord—and of her martial fame when other nations which now boast of their civilisation were in utter ignorance and degradation. I have never known this theme fail to awake the dormant enthusiasm of my countrymen. And therefore, believe me, those who gave the name of Fenians to this new Society did not calculate amiss in supposing that the name would gather round it some of Ireland's most enthusiastic supporters.'

'And do you think they will effect anything?' asked the Earl. 'Anything tangible and practical, whether it be for good or evil?'

'Certainly, they will effect much,' returned Redmond. 'They are increasing daily, and will shortly assume formidable proportions. And when once the Society has leaped the gulf of the Atlantic, and when Fenians in Ireland join with and communicate with Fenians in America, I promise you they will give the English Government quite enough to do.'

'And what good will that effect?' said the Earl. 'It may amuse and interest the people, and

enable the leaders to lead jolly lives at the expense of those who subscribe in aid of the Society, and it may harass and annoy the English Government, but how can it be thought that any real good can come out of such a warfare ?'

'Much good can come out of it,' returned Redmond. 'We are unable to fight a pitched battle with England—that must be admitted. But we have still our grievances; and our principle is never for one moment to let England rest until these grievances are removed. We must worry England, worry Parliament, worry the navy, worry the army, worry the manufacturers in the large towns in England, and, above all, worry those who call themselves "the English garrison in Ireland;" and never let them rest nor give them hope of peace until the evils of Ireland are brought prominently before the world and in sheer self-defence are redressed. Every landlord that is shot aids our cause, because it shows the imperfection of the land laws. Every abuse of the present Church system which comes out prominently to view, is so much in our favour, as it shows the monstrosity of the Anglican Church established by law in Ireland. And every time the Queen of England comes over to Ireland is in our favour, because it shows

the personal loyalty which is innate in the Irish mind, and which has never had an opportunity of indulging itself. *No king or queen since Ireland first came under the dominion of England has ever once lived or so much as had a residence in Ireland !*

‘And do you think?’ asked the Earl—‘you who have thought so much on these matters, and who have read the history of Ireland so carefully—do you really think that *anything* would satisfy Ireland, that *anything* would render her peaceful and contented?’

‘Of course I do, my lord. Of course I do; but has it ever been fairly tried? Has not the rule been rather that of the drummer with the lash in his hand over the back of the unhappy sufferer—“Hit you where you will, there is no pleasing you.” No, my lord, justice has never yet been tried, and until it has, we have no right to conclude that it is impossible to satisfy Ireland. *Take any individual Irishman, and is there a man of any nation in the world so easily pleased and satisfied as he is?* He will put up with more, bear with more, and be more cheerful under hardships and privations than the citizen of any other country in the world. No Englishman would go through one-half what an

Irishman is content to do, and bear, and be satisfied. What right have we then to suppose that the nation, which is composed of individuals such as these, is so different from the individuals themselves? Had England been treated by another nation as Ireland has been treated by England, she would have had her revolution long ago.'

'Will you then permit me to ask have you formed any definite and distinct plans in your mind whereby Ireland could be made contented, so that the Lord-Lieutenant could write truly to Queen Victoria, as the deputy wrote falsely to Queen Elizabeth three hundred years ago, "*Hibernia Pacata*"?'

'No doubt I have,' replied Redmond O'Sullivan. 'It would indeed be vain and futile and unworthy of the cause, and of my own name and character as one who is willing at any moment to draw the sword in the cause of my country (you must expect to hear treason, my lord, if you talk with me) had I no defined and clear conception of what it is we want, of what it is we are prepared to fight for, if we had only the smallest prospect of success.'

'And the remedies?' enquired the Earl. 'How would you enable the Lord-Lieutenant

of Ireland to write truly to the Queen of England—‘Hibernia Pacata’?’

‘I can give you no prescription for such a letter as that,’ replied Redmond. ‘A letter such as that implies two things, the very nature of which must necessarily be inconsistent with the letter. An absentee sovereign and a reigning deputy. [Both of these must always be in direct antagonism to my plans.]’

‘State them yourself, then,’ said the Earl. ‘Let us hear them in your own language.’

‘And if I did,’ replied O’Sulevan, ‘you would only scoff at my presumption. I could give you a panacea for Ireland in one short sentence, which if granted by England would save her all future trouble and anxiety. But it would deluge Ireland herself in blood, and therefore I cannot advocate it.’

‘And what may that be?’ asked the Earl.

‘*The restoration of the forfeited estates,*’ replied Redmond. ‘This is our *real* grievance. This is the root and origin of all our sorrow. The people have set their hearts on it, and would fight for it to the last drop of their blood; yet I know this can never be. England would never consent to it, and she is as ready to fight for these estates as Ireland is herself. I need

not say which would beat the other in the end, backed as England would be by the great Protestant garrison in Ireland. Besides, even if these estates were wrung from their English owners, *their partition in Ireland would be the commencement of a war which a century might not terminate.* Therefore, though this is the dream of Ireland, I place it outside the category of our reasonable demands, and the sooner Ireland awakes from this dream of centuries the better.'

'What then are your practical remedies?' enquired the Earl. 'You have yourself cast away as impracticable the restoration of the forfeited estates.'

'My remedies are threefold,' replied O'Sullivan. 'But we must frighten and worry England far more than we have yet done, before she will see their justice and grant them. I will state them briefly. Equalisation of the national churches; a just settlement of the land question; and A ROYAL RESIDENCE IN IRELAND. If these three remedies were honestly grappled with and honestly granted; if there were any man in England able enough and bold enough to show in clear colours their justice to his countrymen, we should have peace and prosperity in Ireland.'

‘Two of your panaceas are only questions of time,’ observed the Earl. ‘No thoughtful statesman has ever maintained that the present Church of Ireland could ultimately stand its ground. Sooner or later it must go. The church of less than one million can never hold its own as a national establishment, where there are upwards of four millions of people determined to pull it down.’

‘Quite true,’ replied Redmond. ‘But why is not this openly acknowledged by statesmen in and out of Parliament? They will tell you this in society, they think it in their hearts, and yet there is scarcely an English statesman of note who will venture to express this truth in his place in Parliament.¹ Upon what must we then rely to get this great abuse removed? We have nothing but agitation, threatened rebellion, Fenianism, and violence to rely on.’

‘These weapons do not often win the day,’ returned the Earl, ‘against a sensible people and determined Government.’

‘They *never* win it,’ replied O’Sulevan, ‘*unless their cause is just*. But when from long habits of oppressing, from obstinacy, or from inertness and unwillingness to enquire into acknowledged

¹ This conversation took place in 1856.

evils, a nation, or portion of a nation, refuses to do justice to the oppressed, then nothing will rouse them to look into the matter seriously, and set about a remedy in earnest, except repeated attacks, or repeated attempts at rebellion ; so that at last it will be found less trouble to look into the evil and to remedy it, honestly out of hand, than to live in perpetual fear and insecurity of life and property. These are the weapons we must continue to use, and you will find in the end they will be successful.'

'Do you think they will succeed in procuring a just settlement of the land question?' enquired the Earl.

'I cannot say,' replied O'Sulevan. 'The land question is a far more difficult and complicated problem than the church question. Once make up your mind that the church of the minority should not be the national church, that the two churches should in future stand upon equal terms, and there will be no real difficulty in carrying out the details of the measure. Not so with the land question. If we acknowledge the rights of the present proprietors—and I fear it will be impossible to dispute them—if we grant that there is no hope of the restitution of the forfeited estates, and commence now to

legislate on the basis of that settlement, *we then admit at once the right of the Cromwellian, the Saxon, and the Norman to all our ancient possessions*; and it becomes a mere question of the strength of the party in Parliament to say how much power the landlord should surrender, and how much the tenant should gain.'

'Then you do not see your way to any clear and definite goal upon which a moralist could place his finger and say, "So much is just; to go beyond this on either side would be unjust"?''

'I do not,' replied O'Sulevan. 'In the land question there can be none such. Theoretically speaking, the landlord is all-powerful, and he has a right to do what he will with his own—to clear the ground of its inhabitants, and make a deer forest of it, as is so often done in Scotland. Socially speaking, no such right can be admitted. And here is the debateable ground which has occasioned the land-war in Ireland. It is absolutely impossible for any statesman, no matter what his abilities may be, to lay his finger on any great principle of the land question (except perhaps the northern tenant-right), and still less upon any of its details, and say so much is just, so much is unjust.'

‘Then how is it possible that a good land bill can ever be passed?’ said the Earl.

‘It is quite impossible a really good land bill, based on sound and hitherto acknowledged principles of property, ever can be passed,’ observed O’Sullivan. ‘But it is by no means impossible that a *reasonable compromise* may be made between the contending parties. The landlords must give up something, if they expect to retain these forfeited estates. When an honest bill is brought in—a bill really intended to settle the question, and not to blind and throw dust into the eyes of either party, it will become a mere question of party power in Parliament, which must decide the balance to be struck, how much should be taken from the landlord and given to the tenant. There can be no sound principle in the matter. It will be a mere question of degree, and if those who are termed the parliamentary leaders of the people are satisfied, the people must be satisfied too.’

‘Then if once a land bill is passed which will satisfy the leaders of the people, as the best which can be obtained from an able Minister and a liberal Government, you think no more can be done, and that there ought to be peace in Ireland?’

‘I think there will by degrees be comparative peace in Ireland,’ returned O’Sulevan, ‘that is so far as the land question is concerned. But whether there ought to be, or not, is quite another question. If once a land bill is passed on the principles above alluded to, no matter how liberally and generously the tenant may be dealt with, or with what bonds the landlord may be controlled, *a seal is set for ever on the present settlement of Ireland.* The Williamite settlement, the Cromwellian settlement, the Elizabethan settlement, and the Strongbowian settlement of the land is established for ever against the hapless Celtic population. Their dream is gone, and the forfeited estates are for ever handed over to the Saxon whom we can no longer call a stranger.’

‘I trust with all my heart that under these circumstances a sound good land bill will be speedily passed,’ observed Lord Killarney.

‘But you have not yet secured our affections,’ continued Redmond. ‘Suppose that our churches are equalised ; suppose that a liberal land bill is passed, which, whether just or not in the abstract, will yet control the present monstrous power of the landlord, even though it confirms to him his title. Grant all this, but Ireland

looks far beyond it. She wants a legislature of her own ; she wants a *repeal of the Union*. "Impossible," you say ; "this never can be granted." I admit at once that England will never grant it. Repeal, pure and simple, never can be passed. But the cry for repeal is based upon twofold grounds. First, the power of separate legislation. Secondly, the splendour, the profit, and the gratification to the pride of the people of Ireland in having a royal court, a House of Lords, and a House of Commons of their own in Dublin. No sane man can ever really suppose that a repeal of the Union could now be effected, and the two countries continue long under the same crown. Conceive the deadlock which would immediately occur if two parliaments were assembled so close to each other as in London and Dublin, under one monarch, but without another tie to bind them together. How would it be when a question of peace and war arose ? Peace or war, say, with France or America ? Must not anyone see in a moment that if England voted for war, Ireland would vote for peace—nay, very probably would do more—would pass a resolution of sympathy with whatever nation England went to war. These and a thousand other difficulties of an

equally complex nature would most assuredly arise ; and therefore I say that a repeal of the Union can never be, or if it be, must end in total separation. But the only thing which in my mind can ward off repeal, or a rebellion to effect it, is *a royal residence in Ireland*. There is not on the face of the earth a people so addicted to personal loyalty as the Irish. This can be proved in a hundred ways. Their loyalty to their chieftains was always unbounded. Their loyalty to their numerous kings never or rarely failed ; and the very fact that they were not satisfied without a king in every province, and sometimes over single counties, such as Meath, shows the love of the Irish for royal dignity, and that personal loyalty is a plant of indigenous growth. *How deeply, then, must these feelings be outraged by the fact that for seven hundred years no king has ever lived in Ireland !* Chieftains there have been, and great leaders of the people there have been, both ancient and modern, and their loyalty to them was unbounded. And when at long intervals English monarchs have come over on a visit—Henry II., Richard II., George IV., or Queen Victoria—it is impossible that more loyalty and enthusiasm could be shown by any people on the earth.’

‘And do you think these feelings would be exhibited and maintained if one of the royal family, say the Prince of Wales, were to reside some months of every year in Ireland?’

‘I am satisfied it is your only chance,’ replied O’Sulevan. ‘I am satisfied that unless a royal residence is not only provided, *but lived in*, say for at least three months of the year, there will be a cry for repeal, or, what is worse because more plausible, for a federal union, such as will startle and shake England to its centre.¹ The desire for it, as I have said, arises from a two-fold cause. One party desires repeal, because they see clearly that if once it were granted, a collision with England would be inevitable. But another and more moderate party is in its favour, because they think that trade would flourish, that they would thus see more of, and derive more advantage from, the wealthy aristocracy of Ireland than they can do at present, as few of these ever come to Dublin, or spend any portion of their wealth in the Irish capital; all they can afford is spent on the season in London. These moderate repealers believe, and not without some grounds, that were the

¹ The Meath election of a repealer took place since the above was written.

Union repealed, our aristocracy and wealthy Commoners would be compelled to live a great portion of the year in the Irish capital, and its former grandeur and lavish expenditure would be once more revived.'

'And do you think that a royal residence would in any degree compensate for the loss of "a repeal of the Union"?''

'It would certainly be the next best thing,' returned O'Sulevan, 'and after a time, I think it would to a certain degree compensate for its loss. The Irish people are getting very jealous of Her Majesty's preference for Scotland.¹ It is true she lives there in retirement, but then there has been no court habitually held in Scotland ever since her union with England, whilst in Ireland the pageant has been maintained. But suppose the Queen, or the Prince of Wales, now growing to be a man, came over regularly for three months or so in the year, say the months of January, February, and March—the height of the Dublin season, and a time when there is little or nothing doing in London—holding a court occasionally, and living amongst the

¹ This has been much increased of late, and especially so by the recently announced marriage of one of the royal princesses with the son of a Scotch peer.

people, enjoying their sports of hunting and steeple-chasing, and gathering round him the aristocracy of Ireland, I am satisfied an amount of loyalty and enthusiasm would prevail, which would tend to quench repeal in the tide of satisfaction which such a course would set free.'

'But there is no royal residence fit for the reception of Her Majesty or the Prince of Wales.'

'This could easily be obtained,' replied O'Sullivan. 'Ireland would never hesitate to grant any sum which might be necessary to purchase or build such a residence, both in town and country, as would be an honour and credit to the nation. She would take a pride and pleasure in doing so, even though the whole cost were charged on the Irish exchequer. The finest hunting in the world, and over the finest country in the world, is to be had in the neighbourhood of Dublin during the months I have already named. And also steeple-chases innumerable, of which it is said His Royal Highness is fond. He will have had his fill of shooting in England before the time I have named comes round, and no three months could be better spent for the nation, or more pleasantly for himself, if he could only once be brought to enter into it, than the three months

of early spring spent in a royal residence in Ireland.'

'Your remedies for Ireland are then three-fold,' observed Lord Killarney. 'Equalisation of the churches; a settlement of the land question; AND A ROYAL RESIDENCE.'

'Quite so,' returned O'Sulevan. 'And unless these three are granted, and granted in an honest and liberal spirit, there will be separation between England and Ireland.'

'And I think I may fairly add,' returned Lord Killarney, 'that those who seek for more than these, and perhaps some simple arrangements by which local and non-political measures might be more easily passed through Parliament, go in—let them conceal it by what specious arguments they may—for a free and independent republic?'

'That is a question upon which I must decline to give any opinion, my lord,' replied O'Sulevan. 'We must leave events to develop themselves in the future course of Ireland.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE STRANGERS IN LONDON.

It was the merry month of May in London. There are few who have not felt that the month of May is the pleasantest month in the whole London season. April is too cold—sometimes too wet ; and people have not yet shaken fully into their places. Society is not quite sure who is and who is not in town. Dinner parties are not made up so easily or with the same certainty as later ; reception rooms are not so well filled—there being sometimes a little room to stand elsewhere than in the passages, and to sit elsewhere than on the stairs ; and independent of these inconveniences, political parties have not so thoroughly settled to their work as to be able to distinguish accurately between their opponents and their friends. In June or July, on the contrary, the weather is generally too hot. Reception rooms are crowded to excess, and everyone who goes there declares to his or

her friend that they are 'bored to death.' 'Badminton' takes the place of champagne at dinner, and people are either too hot, too worried, too much disappointed, or too much annoyed to be pleased. Go out into the Park between twelve and two, and you see beautiful maidens chaperoned by lovely young wives, both of them flushed, and looking extremely hot—and no wonder. Their persons are encased in tightly buttoned cloth riding-habits, so that if they were going out to hunt in the coldest day in winter they could scarcely be more warmly clad. On their heads they wear a stiff black hat—put on in a mysterious way, no doubt, and kept in its place as if by magic, but still a stiff, black, man's hat, such as they would wear if going to a meet with the Duke of Beaufort's hounds in the month of February or March. Truly, it must take all the good temper of English wives and English daughters—and in most cases their tempers are really imperturbable—to bear such misery as is inflicted in the Park at about one o'clock P.M. in June.

But in the merry month of May all this—or at least a great portion of it—is avoided. True, the weather is sometimes very hot; but if it is,

it is almost always fresh, and a cheerful breeze wafts aside the severity of the sun. The Park is not so crowded, and neither men nor maidens have become so lazy; and you often see a party enjoying a rattling gallop—no policeman thinking it necessary to stop them for furious riding—and a cheery laugh as the horses are pulled up at the barrier. In short, people are not nearly so 'bored' in May, as they are in June or July. And those who get off well and take a good place at starting, are generally going well within themselves, taking their fences joyously, and feeling no distress as yet, or necessity for tailing off in the desperate race of life.

It was the merry month of May in London, when two beautiful young women were sitting at breakfast in a small room in one of the most spacious and richly furnished houses in Grosvenor Square. The elder appeared to be about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. She was becomingly but simply dressed. She wore a long robe which reached uninterruptedly from her neck to her feet, bound round the waist by a single band of silver. Her hair was brilliant chestnut, and had been carelessly fastened up in loose but becoming folds. Her

blue eyes shone forth in kindness and gentleness, with a strong dash of fun. Her laughing mouth and brilliant teeth indicated the most perfect health. A lovely boy, some three or four years old, who called her 'mother,' stood beside her as she sat at the breakfast-table, and a little girl, about two years of age, rolled on the floor amusing herself with a little silver hand bell and with shrieks of crowing laughter. The freedom and joyousness of her own manner told, in language which could not be mistaken, that she was a loved, and honoured, and trusted wife, by him to whom she had given not only her hand but her heart.

The lady who sat opposite to her at the breakfast-table was some years younger. Her figure was slighter, and though beautifully formed, was not so well developed. Her hair was light and bright, almost approaching to yellow. Her skin was fair as a lily, whilst her oval Saxon face, relieved by the high Norman nose, showed an exquisite combination of the most aristocratic races of England. Her countenance was somewhat graver and more pensive than that of her married sister, but showed equal sweetness and simplicity; and well might society be divided in opinion as to whether

Lady Emma Fitz-Norman or her married sister and chaperone, Lady Glandore, possessed most of those graces and attractions which win the heart of man.

Lord Glandore had not yet come up to town. He was a great agriculturist; held a large extent of land in his own hands; advocated steam ploughing; raised green crops; got numerous prizes for fat oxen at Baker Street Annual Show, and for heifers and young bulls at the Royal Agricultural Society's exhibitions in various parts of England; and, finally, was fully persuaded that his swedes could not possibly be got in as they ought to be, nor his mangolds attain the proper size, unless he was there himself to superintend the sowing.

But, though an enthusiastic agriculturist, he by no means neglected or forgot his position as a member of the House of Peers. He was a decided Whig; could maintain his views well and forcibly in debate, and having a strong dash of Irish blood in his veins, rather liked to get into an 'Irish row' in 'the House.' He had a considerable estate in Ireland, which, though he had not often visited, was admitted by all to be well and prosperously managed; and he made use of his position now and then by as-

serting his right as an Irish proprietor to wheel his shelelagh freely whenever Irish questions excited a lively contest in the House. It need only further be said that no man could hold a better place across country when the hounds were running fast, and that he loved his wife with all his heart and doated on his two little children.

‘What is become of Alick this morning?’ enquired Lady Glandore. ‘He is usually very punctual at breakfast.’

‘I think he breakfasts out,’ replied Lady Emma. ‘He said something of doing so as we parted last night at bedtime.’

‘Dear me, how I hate these “breakfastings out”’ exclaimed Lady Glandore. ‘Whenever Glandore “breakfasts out,” as he calls it, I am always sure he has gone somewhere he is rather ashamed of—to breakfast with some one he could not dine with or ask to dine with him. And then such odd people are always asked to meet him, and he and they talk so much that he is good for nothing the whole day after. I really think they talk nothing but treason at those odious breakfasts.’

‘Well, dear, you need not be so much

alarmed for Alick. I am sure he won't talk treason, and I daresay he will be soon home.'

'I am by no means sure he won't talk treason, and a great deal of it, too,' continued Lady Glandore. 'He seems to me to have nothing but treason in his head since his Irish trip. And for my part I think if anything could drive that odd notion out of him—that the Irish are the most amiable people on the face of the earth—I should have thought his being waylaid and almost murdered would have done it.'

'Here he is, at all events!' exclaimed Lady Emma, springing up to meet him. 'Dear Alick! such a whirlwind as has been raging here about you! Madeline has been saying such naughty things, that whenever you breakfast out you talk treason with horrid people, that you would not like to dine with or have to dine with you!'

'Madeline is not so far wrong there,' said Lord Killarney laughing. 'One certainly *does* meet odd people out at breakfast, such as one never met in their lives at dinner. But it is all the better. Dinner parties ~~are~~ made up of fashion. Breakfast parties of intellect.'

'How can you say so, Killarney?' cried Lady Glandore. 'You know very well you meet

none but Irish radicals of the lowest stamp at those odious breakfasts. And I daresay as stupid as they are ignorant. How can you say those breakfast parties are made up of intellect ?

‘Ask Glandore,’ returned Lord Killarney. ‘I know he goes to them sometimes.’

‘That’s what I complain of,’ returned her ladyship. ‘He is really good for nothing the whole day after.’

‘That’s because he has heard so much to think about that he can’t chatter nonsense with his charming wife,’ returned Lord Killarney laughing. ‘But tell me, Madeline, what invitations have you on hand for the next week. Can you come on the fourth to Ulster House? I hear it is the best house in town, and I believe there are invitations for us all.’

‘Of course we go there,’ replied Lady Glandore, ‘and Emma must come too, and I will write to Glandore to come up for it special. The parties there are the nicest in or out of London.’

Lord Killarney was by no means an idle man in town. His acquaintances all remarked that he was changed since his Irish trip ; though no one could exactly tell how or in what respect

the change had taken place. He was certainly graver in his manner, and more earnest in his pursuit of knowledge. But he was not free in his communications with others about the events of his Irish career, over which a certain amount of mystery still hung, which his lordship did not choose to unravel, and into which others hesitated to enquire.

The strangest stories were afloat, and had it not been that Lord Killarney was a man that few wished to come into collision or trifle with, there would have been no end to the questions asked about his marvellous escapes.

The evening of the party at Ulster House came round in due course, and, greatly to the delight of Lady Glandore, her husband came up to escort her. Lady Emma also went, and leaning on the arm of her brother, Lord Killarney, she was certainly amongst the most distinguished and lovely of the many lovely daughters of the nobility present.

Numerous, and aristocratic, and distinguished were the announcements of the well-trained master of the ceremonies, as each carriage rolled to the door, and set down its titled occupants. Ambassador after ambassador, and consul after consul from every quarter of the globe filled

the rooms. English dukes and foreign dukes, counts, barons, marquisses, and such like were all there in abundance. Nor was Ireland unrepresented; and in the midst of German, French, and Spanish languages, the voice of an Irish M.P. was occasionally heard with the true 'Milesian, Corkasian, Phœnician accent,' and in a key that drowned all other noises around him.

A bouquet of duchesses and countesses, blazing with diamonds, had now passed into the saloons, and after a short pause, 'Mr. and Miss O'Sulevan' were announced. They did not enter for a few seconds after their names were given, so that the attention of those near the door was attracted, and a momentary silence took place. But no sooner had they advanced into the room, than a low whisper ran through the saloons, 'Who are they?' 'Never heard their names before.' 'How beautiful!' and Ierne was the object of general admiration and attention.

Donald and Ierne O'Sulevan were received by the noble hostess with her usual graceful courtesy. They were entire strangers, never having been in London before; but the native dignity and grace with which Ierne received her hostess's kind attentions did not fail to attract the notice of the most aristocratic critics

in those princely halls. Ierne was richly but plainly dressed. She wore but few ornaments. Suspended from a massive gold chain, which hung round her neck, was a beautifully wrought miniature Irish harp. It was made of Irish gold, set with emeralds of the finest quality. It was very ancient, but the workmanship could not be surpassed by the most eminent modern artist. On her forehead she wore a diamond star, the centre stone of which almost dazzled by its brilliancy, and was of immense value. She had no other ornament whatever. This was the first occasion in her life on which she had worn these beautiful heir-looms, the only articles of value which she had inherited from her mother. The rich masses of Ierne's hair were fastened mysteriously without either chaplet or band, and as she passed through the bright saloons, leaning on her brother's arm, there were few who did not admit that this unknown brother and sister could stand the test of high-born aristocracy with the proudest and noblest in England.

‘Who are they?’ whispered Glandore to his wife. ‘That girl ought to be a queen; she is perfectly splendid. Who can they be?’

‘I have not the least conception,’ replied his

wife. 'It is an Irish name, I know. But they are new people in town. No one seems to know them.'

'I think I know them,' said Lord Killarney, moving on with the intention of following them. 'Madeline, take care of Emma till I return;' and without saying another word, he followed in the track of the strangers.

'What can Killarney be about?' exclaimed Lord Glandore in amazement. 'Where could he have met these people?' But his astonishment was increased tenfold when he saw Lord Killarney make his way quietly through the crowd till he came close to where O'Sulevan was standing. The moment Donald saw his former guest his whole countenance lighted up, and throwing off completely the dignified, almost stern manner he had hitherto assumed, he shook hands with a hearty joyousness which was warmly returned by the Earl.

Ierne did not at first perceive who it was that her brother was talking with, and supposing it to be some person she could not possibly know in that region of strangers, she did not immediately turn her head. At length Lord Killarney whispered in a low tone, that she only could hear—

‘Ierne, on Lough Currâne, and Miss O’Sullivan, in the saloons of London, seems equally resolved to forget her former friends.’

She started and changed colour—became at first deadly pale, and then the blood rushed to her cheeks. She stood still till her emotion had in some degree subsided. And then turning round and offering her hand with a sweet smile, she said,—

‘You are the last person I could have expected to meet here. You have given me a surprise.’

‘Why should we not meet here?’ said Lord Killarney. ‘This is common ground to all the noblest citizens in the world, and Ireland is not excluded.’

‘That may be true,’ replied Ierne. ‘But I am so much a stranger here! I know no one, and I have never been in a scene like this in all my life before.’

‘Allow me to escort you,’ said Lord Killarney. ‘I will show you through the rooms and gardens, and tell you who most of the lions and lionesses are who are collected here this evening.’ So saying, and walking beside Ierne, he led her and her brother to the gardens, and they soon

disappeared from the watchful gaze of Glandore and his little party.

‘Madeline,’ said Glandore, in a low tone to his wife, ‘Killarney has met those people before, and in a different atmosphere. Did you see how warmly that fine-looking fellow greeted him, and how the lady grew pale first, and then red, and then turned round and shook hands with him as calmly as if he was only an ordinary acquaintance? Depend on it, this is some of his Irish romance that he never would tell any of us a word about.’

‘I can’t fathom it in the least,’ returned Lady Glandore. ‘There is certainly something unusual in the thing, for I never saw such a change as his presence produced upon both of them, though in very different ways. They are evidently Irish, from the name. And the girl is strikingly beautiful. I wonder can he have had any serious flirtation with her before.’

‘I’m sure I am very glad poor Lady Constance did not see it all!’ observed Lady Emma. ‘Killarney has been paying her some little attention of late, and she is certainly not wholly indifferent to him. She would have fainted outright had she witnessed the recognition between him and that Irish beauty.’

‘I would not give much for Constance’s chance, if that dark-eyed houri enters the field against her,’ observed Glandore. ‘I have rarely seen her like. She looks every inch a queen.’

Lord Killarney and his newly found friends had meantime sauntered through the most secluded portion of the gardens. The latter had been much interested by his descriptions of the different ‘lions and lionesses’ whom they had happened to meet, and with many of whom his lordship was well acquainted. The strangers were much observed, and not the less so for being escorted by Lord Killarney, he being well known in the fashionable world, and considered one of the ‘most desirable young men’ in town. Innumerable were the enquiries as to who the strangers were; and when late in the evening Lord Killarney conducted them to their carriage—having never left Ierne’s side from the time they first entered the rooms—the nods and smiles of certain observant parties knew no reasonable bounds.

‘Where are you staying in town?’ asked Lord Killarney, in a low tone of Ierne, as he handed her into her carriage.

‘At Blank’s Hotel in Dover Street,’ she replied.

‘Will you permit me to call to-morrow?’ continued the Earl.

‘Certainly. We shall be at home until three in the afternoon—at least I shall.’

Lord Killarney bowed, and returned to the crowded saloons.

‘I say, Killarney, you have produced quite a sensation to-night!’ said Lord Glandore, as he joined their little party at last. ‘Who are they? Everyone has been talking of them, and you so completely monopolised the dark-eyed beauty, that no one else had the smallest chance.’

‘People are very kind to trouble themselves so much about me and my friends,’ returned Lord Killarney, ‘and I am sure both they and I ought to be very much obliged to them. But really I cannot see all this wonder in the whole affair. When in Ireland some months ago, I stayed for some time at Donald O’Sulevan’s house, and was most kindly and hospitably received there. I was detained longer than I had intended in consequence of an accident, which laid me up for some weeks. Miss O’Sulevan and her sister were then both at home, and of course I became well acquainted with them. They are strangers now in London. O’Sulevan has come over on some business of his own,

and I am sure you will agree with me that it would be unpardonable not to show them some little attention here, when they did all they could to vary the monotony of my confinement from an accident in Ireland.'

'No doubt,' exclaimed Lord Glandore, 'no doubt you are quite right. It sounds all prosaic enough as you tell it. But some way or other there was a dash of romance in the girl's dark eye when she saw you, that belies such a simple tale. I wish I could sprain my ankle, or something of that sort, and have such an attendant "to vary the monotony of my confinement," as you describe it. Eh, Madeline! How awfully jealous you would be. But never mind, my dear fellow. We have all had our little love affairs of one kind or another, and we must not pry into yours. Only you really *did* pay that splendid girl such immense attention, that you can't stop people talking, you know. She is one of the finest creatures I ever saw. And to say nothing of the magnificent diamond star on her forehead, and the antique emerald harp, I have seen nothing like her in town.'

'My dear fellow, such beauties as these are quite common in Ireland,' said Lord Killarney laughing; 'you meet them wherever you go.'

Come with me when I return next autumn, and I will show you a dozen such. Madeline will go wild with jealousy.'

'Not a bit of it,' said Lady Glandore. 'I don't believe a word of it that such beauties are to be found every day in Ireland. And if Glandore goes I am resolved to go with him, and compare notes.'

'Well, I am sure I am very glad my Irish acquaintances are so much approved of,' observed Lord Killarney. 'I have known some people who have been shown all sorts of kindness in Ireland, and have cut their Irish friends dead as soon as they appeared in London.'

'No one can accuse you of that to-night at all events,' returned Lord Glandore. 'And small thanks to you, when you pick up such acquaintances as these. But come; we must all move towards home. I only hope the rest of the world will let you off as lightly as we do.'

'I care very little what the rest of the world may think or say about me,' replied Lord Killarney. 'Come, Emma, the carriage is at the door.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE IRISH BEAUTY.

LORD KILLARNEY called at Dover Street on the following morning. He found Ierne at home, and alone.

‘You are no doubt surprised to see us in London,’ she said smiling, ‘and I assure you my own surprise is quite equal to yours. Our going to Ulster House last night was quite accidental, but Donald wishes me “to go out” a little in London this season, so I did not like to refuse the invitation. Strangers as we are here, you may guess how glad we were to meet you at our first experiment of London life.’

‘And why is Donald anxious you should go out in London?’ asked the Earl. ‘But I can well supply the answer myself. He is dissatisfied, and naturally so, at the obscurity in which his lovely sister has hitherto lived in the remote wilds of Kerry; and the admiration you

attracted last night is a proof of the correctness of his judgment.'

'Lord Killarney is not usually given to compliments,' replied Ierne. 'I think it is the first you have ever paid me. But let it pass. Donald insists on my going out, as he wants me to see some of the great world in which we live, and of which as yet I have seen nothing.'

'Has he any special reason for the wish?' asked Lord Killarney.

'Certainly he has,' replied Ierne. 'It is a secret. But I told him I would have no secrets from you, and that if you asked his reasons I would tell you.'

'Then I do ask,' returned the Earl. 'Not that there is anything peculiar or unreasonable in his wishing his sister to see something of the great world in London. But because I feel sure both you and Donald have other than common reasons.'

'You shall have our reasons then; but remember they are given under strict seal of secrecy. I had made up my mind to enter a convent in France, and had already made all the necessary arrangements for doing so. But Donald having seen a foreign letter on my table, made enquiries about it, and he has always

been so good and kind a brother that I could not refuse to tell him all. He was much distressed, and greatly disapproved of my intention; but seeing me firm, he asked one request, namely, that I would go no further with the matter, nor in any way pledge myself, until I had passed one month with him in London. I could not refuse so reasonable a request. So here I am now, a sort of worldly novice, bound to try how I like the wonderful world into which I was so suddenly introduced last night. My case is a very strange one. I see before me a crown of future glory upon the one side (as the holy sisters tell me), which can never fade, and which will last to all eternity. And on the other side Donald promises me an earthly coronet, decked with every joy which can delight the heart, and gratify the senses of poor human nature. And I am called on to decide within a month!

‘A most strange trial indeed,’ exclaimed Lord Killarney, ‘and one under which poor human nature must find it difficult to make an honest choice. May I ask are you resolved to try it fairly; and if you feel that you can be happy in this world without the necessity of losing the next, will you then decide against the convent?’

‘Honestly, I will,’ replied Ierne. ‘That is, if I see my way clearly to living in this world without prejudicing my hopes of the next, I will remain in it and take the place, whatever it may be, high or low, rich or poor, which God pleases to assign me. But if I see this cannot be—taxing myself honestly, and not merely yielding to my worldly wishes—then I am sure you would yourself approve of my deciding in favour of the convent. I have read your character wrongly indeed, if you would not so act in your own position, were the case laid honestly before you.’

‘Ierne,’ said Lord Killarney, ‘you spoke truly when you said that I rarely or never paid you compliments ; and I pay none now when I say that every time I see you, your noble character rises higher and higher in my estimation. Do not ask me to approve of your design. I feel I am too deeply interested in the result to admit of my arriving at an unbiassed conclusion. Few indeed would have courage to act honestly by themselves in such a trial as this. Let it be. I will not renew the subject on which I once before addressed you—and which I came here to-day for the sole purpose of renewing—until the month you speak of is expired. This is the 5th of May. On the 5th of June I will once

more lay all I have to offer at your feet, and I am content to abide the issue, because I know you will decide with an honest heart, and as in the sight of God.'

Ierne's eyes filled with tears as she held out her hand to Lord Killarney. 'Ever honourable, ever noble, ever true, how shall I repay you the deep debt of gratitude I owe you for your devoted kindness to an unknown and almost friendless girl? Until June 5th, then, we meet as friends and acquaintances, but as nothing more. On that day I promise you my final answer.'

The conversation now turned upon general matters, and amongst the several themes discussed, Lord Killarney enquired whether he could render any assistance to her brother Donald in the business on which he had come to London.

'I think you might be of the greatest service to him,' replied Ierne, 'if you would kindly interest yourself in his case. He has been seeking an appointment in the colonies. I need not tell you that Donald is not rich. But that is not the chief cause which renders him anxious for the appointment. He has been much pressed of late to join in more than one

secret society, both in France and Ireland. His mind is greatly perplexed. Not that he approves of these societies ; but he says it looks as if he were unfaithful or cold to the cause of Ireland when he stands aloof, whilst others join and take an active part in them. He is most anxious for any reasonable excuse to leave Ireland for some years to come. And therefore he seeks this colonial appointment, for which his knowledge, and education, and general acquirements render him peculiarly fitted. If you can help him I am sure you will, and we shall feel so grateful for your assistance.'

'I will do my utmost this very day,' said the Earl. 'I am well known in the Colonial Office, and will call there this afternoon. But tell me of another in whom I am also interested ; how is our friend Teague ; and has he escaped the fangs of the police, who when I was last in Ireland seemed marvellously little anxious to catch him ? Tell me also about Peggy, and old Aileen O'Hanlon. I feel deeply interested in every member of that family.'

Ierne assured him that they were all well and thriving. That a message had been conveyed to Teague that if he would surrender himself to the nearest magistrate, he would be

let out on his own recognizances. That Peggy and he were happy in their engagement again, and that the whole family believed more firmly than ever in ghosts and fairies, as Teague insisted that he himself saw a real ghost in Tipperary; and after that, as Teague says, there's no use in speaking against ghosts or spirits any longer.'

Lord Killarney smiled, as Ierne brought up this latter proof of the reality of Teague's ghosts; but he said nothing. And after some further conversation he took his leave.

His first step was to call at once at the Colonial Office, where he was informed that the Government had already almost decided in Donald's favour, thinking it important to secure the adhesion of a man of Donald's position and influence in the south-west of Ireland. His lordship's advocacy of his claims and high testimony in favour of his character decided the matter, and he was promised that Donald should have the appointment. He wrote a hasty note to Ierne from the office to tell her the good news, and that her brother might set his mind at rest as to the result.

Lord Killarney then returned to his lively sister, Lady Glandore, who had been duly in-

stalled that season as temporary mistress of his house in Grosvenor Square, and who did the honours to their mutual acquaintances in London. He felt a little embarrassed as he told her that he had already left his card for Mr. O'Sulevan, and that he wished his sister to call on the young lady, ask her to a 'kettle-drum' which they were to have on the following day, and to get her and her brother any invitations she could to evening parties at the best houses in town.

Lady Glandore, who, though fond of fun and chaff, yet loved her brother dearly, saw he was in earnest, and entered at once into his plans ; promised that she and Lady Emma would call at once on the 'Irish beauty,' and do all they could to meet their brother's wishes. The Earl kissed his sister tenderly, and that kiss sealed a compact between them that she would aid him loyally and truly, whatever might be his object, without trespassing on his confidence, which it was plain on this occasion he did not wish to open to anyone.

But it was otherwise with Lord Glandore. Full of fun and frolic, which he was wholly unable to control, he had that morning met his old schoolfellow, Mr. Hardon, at whose house

Lord Killarney had passed so long a time in Tipperary. And Lord Glandore did not fail to pump him well as to the Earl's antecedents in Ireland. This was effected by Lord Glandore with such a natural show of interest in his brother-in-law's proceedings, that Mr. Hardon never suspected his real motive—namely, to find out whether any, and what, relations subsisted between Miss O'Sulevan and the Earl.

‘I know nothing of Miss O'Sulevan,’ replied Mr. Hardon, in answer to Lord Glandore's questions, ‘except that it is generally believed in Ireland that she twice saved Killarney's life. Once when he was near bleeding to death from some duel he got into in Kerry; and another time in Tipperary, where there is no doubt that some one appeared in the form of a ghost, or in some strange way, and warned off the murderer just as he was going to fire at the Earl.’

‘And how do you know it was Miss O'Sulevan?’ enquired Lord Glandore, with all the innocent interest he could assume in his frolicsome countenance.

‘Oh! we ascertained that, I may say, almost to a certainty,’ replied Mr. Hardon. ‘The police who were on patrol and several others were terrified at the white figure which passed across

the road when they knew the Ribbonmen were concealed somewhere near. So I put a clever detective on the scent, and we found that two females and a man-servant had come to Thurles a day or two before, in a very secret manner, that they had been out at that very time and in that neighbourhood on a car, and had left early the following morning by train, and that they had taken their tickets for Killarney. Our detective followed them there, when he found they had crossed the mountains to Kenmare. At Kenmare he made special enquiries, and having learned who they were, and all about them, he still followed them. He ascertained to a certainty that the females were Miss O'Sulevan and a girl who went with her as her maid, and he went straight to the house of the latter. He then asked the girl suddenly some questions about her trip to Thurles. She almost fainted at the question, but by degrees was induced to confess all. A more romantic story I never heard. The officer then left, making the girl swear she would never let her mistress know a word of his having been there.'

'Did you ever happen to see Miss O'Sulevan?' enquired Lord Glandore, with as much apparent innocence as before.

‘Never in my life,’ replied Mr. Hardon. ‘But I hear she is a fine handsome girl, lives down in some wild mountains in the west, has lots of courage and pluck, and they say that Killarney was somewhat smitten with her when there. But I don’t believe that he ever heard a word of the romantic story of the ghost.’

‘I suppose the young lady never comes to London?’ observed Lord Glandore.

‘Never, I should think,’ said Mr. Hardon. ‘I should as soon fancy one of the seals of Kilmakilloge migrating to the Thames as that Miss O’Sulevan could come to town for the season.’

Lord Glandore having pumped all he wanted out of his friend, returned to his wife. He briefly told her all he knew, and then warned her : —

‘You must be a little cautious of what you do or say in this matter, Madeline. It is more serious than I thought. That fine dashing girl has actually saved Killarney’s life twice. Once when he got into some scrape in a duel—which by the by he never told us of—and once by appearing amongst the Ribbonmen in Tipperary, when they were on the point of shooting him. I had intended to make lots of fun out of it all, but this rather passes a joke.’

‘Take my advice, dear Glandore, and let matters rest as they are,’ said his wife affectionately. ‘There is evidently more in this whole affair than Alick chooses to tell, and you may, unconsciously, do him real injury by your chaff. He has asked me to call upon Miss O’Sulevan, and invite her to our five o’clock tea to-morrow, and also he wishes me to get them invitations to some of the best houses. There is no doubt they were very kind to him in Kerry, and certainly they are the most presentable people I have yet seen from Ireland. So just let him have his way, and don’t worry him about it. He will *take* his way, moreover, whether you chaff him or not.’

‘Well, well, I don’t want to mar any plot. So let him do as he pleases,’ replied Lord Glandore good-humouredly. ‘It is a very odd affair altogether, and certainly there is more in it than I thought at first. I can tell you, however, that whether through Hardon or others, I can’t say, but some uncommonly queer stories have already oozed out, so if you should hear some odd things, don’t blame me about it.’

Ierne and her brother Donald appeared at Grosvenor Square next day, and were most

kindly received by Lady Glandore. A large party had been invited to meet the new 'Irish beauty,' and the rooms were nearly full at the five o'clock tea. Lord Killarney did not appear, but Lady Glandore did her utmost to put her guests at their ease, and completely succeeded in her efforts. Amongst other attentions she chanced to ask Ierne if she sang, and the latter saying she knew some Irish songs, the room was soon hushed to listen to her.

She did not move towards the piano. Nor did she ask for her guitar, or complain that she had forgotten her music; but after a moment of breathless silence her rich voice was heard to issue softly, as it were, from the depths of her bosom; and without any accompaniment whatever, or changing the position where she sat, she sang one of the sweetest of Moore's beautiful melodies:—

' Let Erin remember the days of old,
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her;
When Malachi wore the collar of gold
Which he won from the proud invader;
When her kings with standard of green unfurl'd,
Led the Red-Branch knights to danger;
*Ere the emerald gem of the western world
Was set in the crown of a stranger!*

'On Lough Neagh's bank, as the fisherman strays,
When the clear cold eve's declining,
He sees the round towers of other days
In the wave beneath him shining ;
Thus shall memory often in dreams sublime,
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over ;
Thus sighing look through the waves of time
For the long faded glories they cover.'

Her voice was rich and deep, and clear as the trumpet sound ; and yet it contained a sweetness and pathos which, combined with the words she sang, moved every heart in the room, though none could tell why they were affected. Many crowded round her, and entreated her to sing again ; she did so with the utmost simplicity ; song after song followed, and entranced the delighted audience. At length some conversation having arisen about the origin of the ancient Irish in early pre-historic times, and Ierne having been appealed to for her decision, she only smiled and sang another of Moore's melodies :—

'THE SONG OF INNISFAIL.'

*'They came from a land beyond the sea,
And now o'er the western main
Set sail, in their good ships, gallantly,
From the sunny land of Spain !*

"Oh ! where's the isle we've seen in dreams,
Our destined home or grave?"
Thus sang they as by the morning's beams
They swept the Atlantic wave.

'And, lo, where afar o'er ocean shines,
A sparkle of radiant green,
As though in that deep lay emerald mines
Whose light through the waves was seen.
"Tis Innisfail! 'Tis Innisfail!"¹
Rings o'er the echoing sea;
While bending to heaven, the warriors hail
That home of the brave and free.

'Then turned they into the eastern wave
Where now their Day-God's eye
A look of such sunny omen gave
As lighted up sea and sky;
Nor frown was seen through sky or sea,
Nor tear o'er leaf or sod,
When first on their Isle of Destiny
Our great forefathers trod.'

Again she ceased, and again a burst of applause from the surprised audience greeted her. But she was neither exalted nor excited, and replied with simplicity to any questions which were asked concerning her songs or music. The party now began to break up, and Ierne rose with the others.

'You have covered yourself with glory, my

¹ The Isle of Destiny, one of Ireland's ancient names.

dear Miss O'Sulevan,' said Lady Glandore, kindly taking both her hands in hers. 'We have heard nothing so beautiful, nothing so charming and fresh. You will find some invitations on your table when you return home which I hope you can accept; and if your brother should not be able to accompany you, pray count on me as your chaperone. You will be quite safe, I assure you, under my charge, and with my sister, Lady Emma.'

Ierne felt overpowered by such kindness, but she knew well it could only emanate from one source; so she thanked Lady Glandore warmly, and retired.

It was the 1st of June. Nearly a month had passed since Lord Killarney had called at the hotel in Dover Street. The greater part of the period had been passed by Ierne in full participation of London life and society. Had she been happy? She could not say she had. She had been out almost every night. She was admired, courted, and sought for, and her peculiar singing of her Irish songs met with unbounded applause. But still she was not happy. In the mornings she had ridden frequently with Lord Glandore, who delighted in escorting her in the Park. Her seat on horse-

back was perfect. Not the stiff town seat one so often sees in the Park, but that sympathetic seat which shows at once that the horse and the rider are one. Her horse, an accomplished hunter, was not always so manageable as he would have proved in the hunting-field. On one occasion he lost his temper, and dashed plunging down the ride, threatening the safety of more sober equestrians. Ierne, seeing the danger, pulled him up suddenly, and wheeling him half round, put him straight at the iron railing at the side, and cleared it at a bound. The perfection of the riding of the 'Irish beauty,' and her apparently dauntless courage, obtained universal applause.

'By Jove!' exclaimed Lord Glandore, 'it beats anything I ever saw in my life. Not one man out of twenty could manage that wild Tipperary horse, and that girl can make him do what she pleases. If he breaks out now and then, as he sometimes does, she puts him at some awful leap, which soon brings him back to his senses. They say also she can kill a bird on the wing with her rifle as easily as I could hit a sparrow with small shot. If girls like that are going cheap in Ireland, I recommend all my unmarried friends to go over there at

once, for they will not easily get the like in London.'

But still Ierne was unhappy. It was the first of June, and the distinguished owners of Ulster House gave a party that evening, to which the 'Irish beauty' was invited; and the same large assemblage of foreign nobility and English aristocracy again crowded the saloons.

Amongst those present was an eminent Roman Catholic bishop. Ierne and he had long been friends, and she appeared to cling to him on this occasion with more than ordinary affection. Lord Killarney had also gone there, although he had not appeared much in public of late; and seeing the Bishop, whom he had met in Ireland, he greeted him kindly and warmly. The Bishop proposed a walk in the grounds, which was readily assented to by his companions; and amongst other interesting subjects the conversation seemed naturally to turn upon the union of the western Churches.

'Do you think,' asked Ierne, 'that an union of all the great Churches of Christendom can ever come to pass? Oh what a happy union that would be to see accomplished in our day!'

'I cannot see my way to it,' said the Bishop. 'The only one true Church—holy, Catholic,

infallible, and indivisible, cannot give way. She cannot yield one jot of truth to gain the whole world. She can enter into no compromise. If therefore an union takes place, it can only be by the heretic wanderers coming back to the bosom of their mother. Gladly indeed would she receive them, but the time has not yet come. The prodigals are still feeding on the husks that the swine do eat.'

'Many of the prodigals you allude to are feeding on the bread of life,' returned Lord Killarney earnestly. 'They have long since cast aside the husks, and their meat and drink is the unadulterated Word of God.'

'I meant no offence, my lord, in what I said,' replied the Bishop gently. 'But to me it does seem strange—I am sure your lordship will excuse me—that private individuals, deeply engaged in the affairs and business of life, can set up their judgment against the universal decisions of the most holy men since the days of the apostles and of our Lord Himself; and insist that they can see and know the truth better than those who for eighteen hundred years have given their whole souls to discover it; and have finally agreed in their judgment on the answer to the great question asked by

Pilate of our Lord—"What is truth?" Permit me to illustrate what I mean,' continued the Bishop. 'Take your lordship for instance. You are earnest, truth-loving, and intelligent. Your abilities are good, and your powers of reasoning acute. But your station requires—and justly requires—that you should be deeply engaged in the affairs and business of life. Politics, both foreign and domestic, must necessarily engross much of your lordship's thoughts. Your private affairs are considerable, and must also occupy much of your attention. Let us speak as wise men speak, and act as wise men act. Let us calculate fairly on the proper division of labour. You would do so in all other transactions of life. If you are ill you send for your physician. If a lawsuit is threatened you send for your law adviser to consult with. If you wish to lay out a railway you consult the ablest engineers. How is it, then, that in the most important concerns of all—that upon which hangs an eternity of happiness or misery—you at once assume all these functions to yourself; you insist on being your own physician, your own lawyer, your own engineer, and with an audacity (excuse me, my lord), so amazing that in *any other* concern of life it

would at once be pronounced by a jury as insanity, you insist on casting to the winds all authority, all labours of the most learned and holy men for the last eighteen hundred years, and you take your own path across the unknown mountains of doubt without guide or compass to the goal of everlasting life ?'

Ierne watched with the keenest interest the effect of the Bishop's speech upon the Earl. But she could see no sign of wavering, no symptom of vacillation or uncertainty. He was silent for some minutes, and they walked on, almost unconsciously, buried in their own reflections. At last Lord Killarney spoke.

'You have brought a heavy indictment against me, I admit, and one which it is hard to answer at a moment's notice. But a broad fallacy seems to me to pervade the whole. That fallacy consists in comparing the Word of God to any work of man. No doubt in all human works, your argument is perfectly unanswerable. But the Word of God is not a human work. It is a divine revelation given by God to his creatures on this earth ; preached by our Lord to poor fishermen, handed down by them to the meanest in the land, so that those who believed were considered as the "off-scouring

of all things." This Word of God—pure and fresh as when it emanated from the Divine fountain, we have each of us placed in our hands. And woe to him to whom God has granted ears to hear, and eyes to see, and a heart to understand, if he allow himself to be led away from this living fountain of water, to quench his thirst in the adulterated streams of man's more palatable devices.'

'Shall we join our friends?' said the Bishop, courteously. 'We ought not to detain this Irish diamond too long in the obscurity of the gardens.' So saying, and smiling blandly, he led the way to the saloons where most of the company were assembled. For a moment he stopped and hesitated, and then offering his arm to Ierne he led her a little apart.

'He is an obstinate and determined heretic,' he said in a whisper. 'You may set your mind at rest upon that point. In my judgment he will never become a true son of the Church.' So saying, he again smiled blandly, bade a warm farewell to Ierne, held out his hand to Lord Killarney, from whom he parted with protestations of the most sincere interest and regard, and took his leave with the ease and grace of an accomplished courtier.

‘I assure you,’ said Lady Fussleton to Lord Glandore, ‘you are quite mistaken. I heard the whole story from an eye-witness, or, what is the same thing, from a friend of mine to whom the eye-witness told it. What actually happened was this. Those horrid Ribbonmen were all collected to murder Lord Killarney—dear man, how *could* they think of killing him!—when she appeared amongst them in the shape of a beautiful white swan, and sang so sweetly some of those beautiful melodies that she quite charmed those horrid men, and at her intercession they went away, and vowed they would never hurt a hair of Lord Killarney’s head.’

‘But what became of the white swan?’ asked Lord Glandore. ‘How did she get away from them after her beautiful songs?’

‘Oh, well, I don’t exactly know,’ replied Lady Fussleton. ‘I suppose she *flew* away of course, as I believe swans can always fly when they please.’

‘Not a doubt of it,’ exclaimed Lord Glandore, enjoying beyond measure Lady Fussleton’s account of the transaction. ‘Of course you heard all about the duel? I never knew exactly what happened. Perhaps you can explain it too.’

‘Oh dear, yes,’ said Lady Fussleton. ‘I heard all about it, and I can tell you the whole thing. You see some odious fire-eater of an Irishman, who had himself killed three men in duels, insisted on poor dear Killarney’s meeting him ; and so they did ; and of course he shot him as soon as ever he came upon the ground.’

‘Who shot who?’ asked Lord Glandore innocently.

‘The Irishman shot Killarney of course,’ replied Lady Fussleton. ‘How could you ask such a question? Well, then, *she* was looking on all the time, for ladies, you know, always attend duels in Ireland. And having, I suppose, seen twenty wounds of the kind, she at once bound up his leg and carried him off in her boat, and cured him. They really say if she had not been there he must have died of his wounds.’

‘A very interesting story indeed!’ remarked Lord Glandore ; ‘very interesting indeed. Did your ladyship hear of any more adventures Killarney had with that young lady in Ireland?’

‘Well, indeed I did,’ said Lady Fussleton. ‘But, to say the truth, I didn’t exactly understand it, nor can I give it with the same authority as the two last adventures I have mentioned.’

There is some odd story of their diving down to the bottom of the sea together, somewhere out in the Atlantic ; and of his having proposed for her whilst they were both under water. But no one knows exactly what happened, as of course no one could hear them when they were down there. Some say they are engaged, others say there is some understanding between them ; but what that means I'm sure I have not the least idea. All I know is that I think she must be a very odd girl.'

'They seem to have chosen a very cold place to make love in, I should think,' observed Lord Glandore. 'But any way, she is the finest girl I have seen in London ; and if you only heard the beautiful little musical Kerry brogue that comes out of that beautiful little musical mouth, you would think she'd wheedle a bird off a bush!'

Here Lord Killarney joined the party. 'I say, Killarney,' said Lord Glandore, 'did you hear of Miss O'Sulevan's performance on horse-back this morning ? She nearly frightened my wits out, I assure you.'

'I heard she leaped the iron rails,' replied Lord Killarney. 'But that was a trifle to the horse she rode. He could clear a six-foot wall.'

'Aye, if he could get anyone to sit him over

it,' said Lord Glandore. 'But believe me it was no joke to see that girl turn him at those iron rails as coolly as if it was only a two-foot hedge. And splendidly she sat him over it too.'

'I have seen her do far wilder things than that in Ireland,' said Lord Killarney gravely. 'Good night.'

'I told you so !' whispered Lady Fussleton to Lord Glandore.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

THE fifth of June was not long in coming round, and on that promised day, at noon, Lord Killarney called at Dover Street. He found Ierne, as he had expected, alone.

‘I have come to know my fate,’ he said. ‘You promised me a final answer on the fifth of June.’

‘I think you already know it,’ replied Ierne. ‘Do you remember our conversation with the Bishop?’

‘I remember it perfectly.’

‘In that conversation you have my final decision,’ said Ierne. ‘Can two walk together except they be agreed? Can I, or ought I, to join hands in wedlock with one whom my church pronounces to be outside her holy pale?’

‘Ierne,’ replied Lord Killarney, ‘I will not deny that I have long looked forward to—long

dreaded—this decision. Nor can I say that I think lightly of your scruples. I have felt these differences in our creeds myself, and they have weighed heavily on my mind. But I am not a bigot. I am not one of those who believe—as some Protestants believe—that there is no salvation in your church; and I had hoped that by mutual concession, by mutual love, and by the exercise of that sound and excellent sense which on every occasion you have proved yourself to possess, that matters might have been so arranged between us that the difference of our religious professions need have raised no absolute barrier to our union.’

‘And I had at one time hoped,’ replied Ierne, ‘that by mutual concessions, by devoted love, and by the exercise of those endowments of ability and good sense which all admit Lord Killarney to possess—I had hoped that you would have seen in our good Bishop’s arguments at least some grounds for enquiry—some hope of a change, however future or distant. Alas! I fear me that my hopes are vain, that I have leant upon a broken reed, and that it has pierced deeply, oh, how deeply, into my hand.’

The Earl was silent for some minutes. At length he said—

‘And is it even so? And must the holiest and purest love that man ever felt towards woman be scattered to the winds, and two hearts separated for ever, to satisfy the prejudices of some haughty priest? I begin to think that I have bestowed my love in vain; and that where I had freely cast in all, a part of the price has been kept back by you. Is it possible I can have been deceived?’

Ierne rose, and stood opposite to Lord Kilarney where he sat. He was about to rise also, but she motioned him to remain seated; and then she said—

‘Until this moment I never knew an unworthy thought to pass through your mind. Until this moment I never saw a shade of anger on your brow. Both are alike foreign to your nature. Listen to me now, and if I make a confession I had not intended to make—which I have scarcely made even to myself—it is because in this, our last hour together, I dare not leave you under a false impression. I now return the words you used to me when leaving the holy island in Lough Currâne; and I tell you that from the first hour we met on the top of the Cahah Mountains, you have been the guiding star, the only object, of my life. I

have neither acted, moved, nor thought, but with reference to you? Why should I hesitate? Why should I not confess, in this hour of deepest sorrow, that I have loved you with a depth man's love can never fathom? I have thought over you, prayed over you, risked my life for you, but I cannot, I dare not, lose my immortal soul to gain you. Oh that I could be your slave; that I could sit near you, watch over you, wait on you in health, tend you in sickness, and lay down my life to save yours! But I dare not trust myself to be your wife. So intense is my love for you—so deep is the power that you possess over my soul—that I feel were I once your wife I would turn infidel or anything to please you. Amidst the ruin and persecution which have pursued our race, we have throughout adhered to our religion. This last relic of our former freedom we have still retained untarnished. You cannot change—I dare not; and thus in the old, old cause, another victim must be sacrificed. Farewell, my first, my last, my only love! I leave this night for France. If I have pained you—and I know I have—forgive me. Had I a thousand lives I would lay them all down willingly to save you a moment's sorrow.'

Lord Killarney had not moved. He did not raise his eyes from the ground whilst she spoke. He seemed stupefied—overwhelmed—and sat motionless as one entranced. She had been standing near him as she spoke; suddenly she knelt down before him; she took his hand in both of hers—meekly kissed it, and was gone!

The Earl awoke as from a dream. He rushed to the door, but she had already passed away. He knew that she was gone—gone for ever.

How long Lord Killarney remained in the room in Dover Street, he never knew. When first he awoke to a full consciousness of things around him, he found himself sitting under some trees in an unfrequented part of Hyde Park. It was night—a warm sultry night in June. At last he rose, and walking towards the gates he found that they were closed. It was evident that he had escaped the observation of the police, and that he was shut in for the night. He remained quietly on one of the seats until the gates were re-opened in the morning, when going immediately to his own house in Grosvenor Square, and entering it unobserved, by his private key, he retired to

his own room. He appeared at the usual hour at breakfast, and made some efforts at cheerfulness, but it was plain to the watchful eyes of his sisters that something had happened to disturb him. After breakfast, Lady Emma rose to leave. Madeline lingered for a few moments, and when she and her brother were alone, she placed her hand tenderly on his shoulder, and said—

‘Alick, has anything happened? You were not in the house all night.’

‘Yes, Madeline,’ he replied. ‘Something has happened. I have been taught a lesson of noble self-sacrifice which I can never forget till the latest day of my existence. It was I who ought to have been the teacher. But the lesson has not been thrown away.’ He kissed his sister tenderly—rose and left the apartment.

Two years had passed away.—

Donald O’Sulevan had sailed to the Antipodes on his high mission in the Colonial service. Kathleen had retired to a local convent, and became one of Ireland’s gifted historians. Teague and Peggy were happily married, and had an ‘elegant place of their own,’ high up

in the glen. Some kind and liberal friend had sent Peggy a dower of five hundred pounds through the good old priest at Ardea, who told her it came from an honourable gentleman, and she need not hesitate to take it. Old Aileen migrated with them, and they live there happy and contented.

Two years had passed away.—

Lord Killarney had spent the time in travelling. He had visited Norway, and passed some time in Russia. He had visited St. Petersburg and Moscow, and had seen every city and country lying between central Europe and the sunny plains of Italy. As winter approached he made his way to Constantinople, and from thence to Egypt, and up to the second cataract of the Nile. Nor was he content with visiting the cities and countries of the Old World; he desired also to see the New. In the New World there is much to learn, more perhaps in some respects than in the Old, and he resolved to visit England's colonies.

Lord Killarney arrived in Australia towards the end of the second year. Having landed at one of the chief cities of the colony, where his friend Donald O'Sulevan was located, he resolved to visit him. O'Sulevan was now a man of note

in the colony. He was looked up to and respected for his talents, and beloved for his kindness of disposition; and when Lord Killarney, on his arrival, sent him a note to say he would call on him the following day, his gratification was hearty and sincere.

Lord Killarney called in the morning, and was warmly received by his friend. Various subjects were discussed between them; and O'Sulevan's knowledge of and connection with the New World afforded a store of information to the Earl. At length O'Sulevan said—

‘Will you dine with me to-day? You will meet an old friend, whom it will perhaps surprise you to see here.’

‘Whom can you mean?’ asked Lord Killarney. ‘I did not expect to meet anyone here that I had ever seen before, except yourself.’

‘You will meet my sister Ierne,’ replied O'Sulevan. ‘She is living with me here at present.’

‘Ierne!’

‘You are surprised, no doubt,’ said O'Sulevan, in reply to Lord Killarney's exclamation. ‘But she has been staying here for some time past.’

‘Then she has left the French convent?’ enquired Lord Killarney.

‘She has,’ replied O’Sulevan. ‘She remained in it nearly a year. But she found it uncongenial to her whole spirit—unsuited altogether to her temper and disposition of mind. The sisters were very kind to her, and some of them seemed very happy. The mother Abbess also was all that she could wish in her demeanour towards her. But the system seemed to her so limited and confined, and the tone of the sisters’ minds so unsuited to the depth of intellectual pursuits in which Ierne had always delighted, and which she saw no reason to abandon, that after many months’ residence amongst them, she left convent life for ever, and came to live with me.’

‘And do you think she will ever seek access to a convent again?’ enquired Lord Killarney.

‘Certainly not,’ replied O’Sulevan. ‘She has quite made up her mind on that point. I need not tell you that in these rough young colonies there are no restrictions upon literature. Everyone reads what he likes. And Ierne, startled at what she witnessed as the exemplification of a religious life in the convent, and naturally of a free and fearless disposition, commenced the

study of that Book which all sects admit to be the groundwork of the Christian faith. There was no one to hinder her, no one to impede her. And an earnest study of the Bible has led to a complete change of all her religious convictions.'

'This is indeed good news,' said Lord Killarney.

'It is not by any means an uncommon course of events in this country,' continued O'Sullivan. 'In Ireland those who venture to read or think for themselves are frequently set down as infidels. Here it is quite different. All religions are freely discussed. The Bible is read and studied, and I need not tell you that where this is done, the mind becomes emancipated from many trammels. Ierne's mind was essentially suited to an impartial study of the Scriptures, and the study of the Scriptures has produced in her the result which has so often happened.'

The little party of three met at dinner. They dined early; and after dinner Donald went to his office, and Ierne and the Earl were left alone. Lord Killarney was the first to speak.

'Donald has given me a brief sketch of your history since we parted,' he said. 'How little did I think that I should ever meet you in my

travels. Above all, how little did I think that I should meet you here.'

'You cannot be more surprised than I am,' replied Ierne.

'The surprise is mutual; and I trust the pleasure also. Ierne, I have never changed. I have wandered, since last I saw you, from north to south, and from east to west; but my love has never altered, never for one moment varied. If I have rightly understood your brother Donald, the decree of the fatal fifth of June may now be reversed. Once more, dear Ierne, once more, after two long years of travel but of still unaltered love, I ask you to be my wife.'

They were standing together at the window, looking out upon a garden as he said this. Ierne trembled violently. At length, looking up into his face, and placing her hand upon his, she said—

'I can now trust myself to be your wife.'
Lord Killarney pressed her to his heart.

Months more had passed away.—

It seemed an age to Lord Killarney since that terrible fifth of June when he had passed the

night in a trance in Hyde Park. How different was now the scene !

It was a lovely summer's evening. The mountains were blazing with bonfires. Above, below, in the green valleys of Tipperary, everywhere bonfires blazed. In the very gap of the Devil's Bit a bonfire mounted high which could be seen from seven counties. Wild cheers and shouts of joy greeted Lord Killarney and his young and beautiful bride at every turn of the road. And as they drove up the approach to Mr. Hardon's house in an open carriage, a cheer burst from thousands of willing hearts, which made the mountains ring again.

Lord Killarney alighted from his carriage, and having introduced his bride to his friend and to the assembled crowd, he entered again the hospitable halls of Mr. Hardon. A cheer then arose outside, so long and loud and passionate, that it almost startled the Earl. Ierne smiled. The Earl looked to his friend for an explanation.

' It is a wild cheer of welcome to your Celtic bride,' he said ; ' a cheer such as that comes fresh from the Irish heart. Do you remember, Killarney, the last words I spoke to you as you left this door more than two years ago ?'

‘Yes,’ replied the Earl. ‘They astonished me at the time, and they have remained impressed on my mind ever since. You told me that the next time I came to Ireland I should be the most popular man in Tipperary.’

THE END.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
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